

PART IV

INDIGENOUS KOREAN CHRISTIANITY

Koreans accepted Christianity, “new wine,” through their own religious and cultural perspectives and contextualized it to their own situations, “fresh wineskins,” with the help of evangelical missionaries. What kind of fresh wineskins did they prepare for the new wine, Christianity? What was their motive of conversion to the new religion? What were their attitudes toward traditional religions? What were their messages to other Koreans who had believed in the teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism? These critical issues should be answered in order to know theological orientation of the early Korean Church. Korean Christian’s testimonies and confessions of faith also reveal their understanding of traditional religions. Prominent features of the indigenized Korean Churches will show the acculturated and adapted form of Christianity in the Korean context.

Chapter 1. Korean Christians’ Conversion Experiences and Fulfillment Theory

Early Korean Christians’ conversion stories reveal their understanding of the relation of Korean religions with Christianity and their motives of conversion as well. The main thesis of this chapter is that fulfillment theory helped Koreans to accept Christianity. The first generation Korean Christians believed the fulfillment of the traditional human ways of Korean religions by the perfect Heavenly Way of Christianity.¹

1. From Taoism to Christianity

Between 1894 and 1897 a group of Taoists in P’yŏngyang—Song In-sŏ, Kim Chong-sŏp, Kil Sŏn-ju, and others—were converted to Christianity. They formed a leader group in the Presbyterian Church in P’yŏngyang and northwestern Korea, and most of them were ordained as elders or ministers by 1907. Their conversion stories, with those of Pang Ki-ch’ang (who was

¹ In the following analysis, a person’s religion is divided into six categories: Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, multi-religions, Tonghak, and folk religions. This does not mean that one was exclusively a holder of a religion, but a dominant religion at the time of his conversion was Taoism or Confucianism or Buddhism. Basically these persons had multi-religious identity.

converted from Tonghak) and Yang Chŏn-baek (converted from Confucianism), will show both the earlier spiritual condition of the Presbyterian churches in P'yŏng'an Provinces and the attitude toward traditional Korean religions of Presbyterian missionaries such as S. A. Moffett.

The first people converted in P'yŏngyang between 1893 and 1894, however, did not belong to the Taoist group, but to the merchant class. In May 1893 Moffett visited P'yŏngyang again.² He stayed at a small house inside the East Gate, which had been an inn. Mr. Han Sŏk-chin (韓錫晉, 1868-1939) bought it quietly with the money given from the mission.³ On June 4, 1893 Moffett held the first Sunday worship service at the house, located at Nŏlttari-gol [P'angyo-dong]. It was the beginning of P'yŏngyang Presbyterian Church. Moffett "preached to a company of some 20 persons."⁴ Moffett went to Seoul and came back to P'yŏngyang on September 1. During his absence, Mr. Han led the Sunday services with two or three Koreans. Han's first convert was Ch'oi Ch'i-ryang (崔致良), an innkeeper and merchant (客主), who was "a respectable man" and whose acquaintances were numerous.⁵ He stopped drinking and gambling. Through his

² In March 1893, Moffett, Lee, Swallen, and Sŏ Sang-yun went to P'yŏngyang. Encouraged by Dr. Hall's purchase of two houses in the name of Mr. Yu, a Korean helper, Moffett and Lee bought a property in the name of Mr. Han Sŏk-chin. But the governor Min Pyŏng-sŏk, a conservative, ordered the deeds to be returned to the original owners. (Graham Lee to F. F. Ellinwood, April 13, 1893)

³ Han Sŏk-chin was baptized by S. A. Moffett at Ŭiju in September of 1891. He attended the Helpers' Theological Class held in Seoul in November of 1892. Han moved to P'yŏngyang in the spring of 1893, and was appointed as Moffett's helper in October. See Yi Tŏk-chu, *Nara ŭi Tongnip Kyohoe ŭi Tongnip* (Seoul: Christian Literature Press, 1988).

⁴ S. A. Moffett to F. F. Ellinwood, June 6, 1893. It was not a residential house for a missionary, but a kind of inn owned by Mr. Han. As a missionary did not have the right to reside in an inland city, Moffett bought it in the name of Mr. Han in order to stay there when he visited the city. (S. A. Moffett's personal "Annual Report for 1893.") Thus when the "P'yŏngyang Persecution Incident" took place in May of 1894, the government made an issue of the "Hall's property," not Han's "East Gate property."

⁵ Some walls of Ch'oi's inn rooms were papered with the scriptures distributed by Rev. R. J. Thomas in 1866. (O Mun-hwan, "Han'guk kidokkyo inmulsa—Han Sŏk-chin moksa chŏn (3)," *Han'guk kidok sibo* (Aug. 30, 1957), 2.) He experienced intense struggles in conversion against friends' ridicule and his own habit of drinking. (*ARBFMPCUSA for 1894*, 159.) He was "the most prosperous member of Pyeng Yang Church." (S. A. Moffett, "Pyeng Yang Station, Oct. 1895.") In 1898 Ch'oi bought a house and rice fields for the poor people at Changch'ŏngdong and built a chapel for them. He also built a chapel and a school at Namch'angni and supported the teacher's salary. (Yi Yŏng-ŏn, "Kyohoe t'ongsin," *KS* (June 23, 1898), 237.) Later he moved to Taedong and established a church at Pyŏlch'onni. He was ordained as elder in 1914. (Ch'a Chae-myŏng, ed., *Chosŏn yesugyo changnohoe sagi* (Seoul: Chosŏn Yesugyo changnohoe, 1928), 113; Han'guk kyohoesahakhoe ed. *Chosŏn yesugyo changnohoe sagi*, vol. II (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1968), 117.)

conversion and reformed life, the news of the gospel had been widely scattered.⁶ Moffett bought a bigger tile-roofed house for Han's family and himself, for the former inn house had rooms too small to stay in the hot summer and the neighborhood was in an unhealthy area. Moffett commenced the systematic and careful instruction of "a class of catechumens around which as a nucleus the number of constant attendants" gathered.⁷ He traveled to Ŭiju and returned to Seoul in order to attend the annual meeting held in October. He reported that he had not "opened" P'yŏngyang but was "occupying" it.⁸

Moffett came back to P'yŏngyang again in November 1893 with the intention of spending the winter in the city. Moffett wrote,

The room which serves me as a reception room, study, dining-room and bed-room, is what the Koreans call a 'Sarang,' that is a room open to anyone and everyone at all times of day or night. Thus privacy is out of the question and such a run of visitors from early morning until midnight has there been that I could hardly get time to rest or eat. ... I hear of a great many who are secretly praying to the true God. At the same time the great mass of people, as usual, look upon the truth with suspicion, ridicule and hatred.⁹

Moffett's "direct contact with the people, living in the midst of them, meeting them every day and all day, entering into their lives, and having them enter into" his was "the true secret of missionary success." His discernment of Korean people's spiritual longing for "the true God" was rewarded with the first baptisms on January 7, 1894. Moffett reported,

For several months ten or more men have been regular attendants of our Sabbath service and Wednesday evening prayer meeting. Last week the class of Catechumens was examined and on Sunday January 7th eight men were publicly baptized and partook of the Lord's Supper. It was a joyful day to Mr. Han and to me for our united prayer and great longing has been to see souls gathered into a church of Christ-men whose faith should stand in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Two others were publicly received into the Catechumen class. The Lord has thus been working even in this the most wicked city of Korea and a beginning has been made in calling out the Lord's own.¹⁰

⁶ S. A. Moffett to F. F. Ellinwood, Jan. 12, 1894.

⁷ They were Ch'oi Ch'i-ryang, Yi Tong-sŭng, Chŏn Chae-suk, Mun Hŭng-jun, Cho Sang-jŏng, and Ŭm Pong-t'ae. (Kil Chin-kyŏng, *Yŏnggye Kil Sŏn-ju* (Seoul: Chongno sŏjŏk, 1975), 43.)

⁸ S. A. Moffett, "Report of Work in Pyeng An Province: Pyeng Yang—Eui Ju—Kou Syeng, Oct. 1893."

⁹ *ARBFMPCUSA for 1894*, 158.

¹⁰ S. A. Moffett to F. F. Ellinwood, Jan. 12, 1894. The first baptized eight men were Ch'oi Ch'i-ryang (崔致良), Yi Tong-sŭng (李東昇), Chŏn Chae-suk (田載淑), Mun Hŭng-jun (文興俊), Cho Sang-jŏng (趙相鼎), Ŭm Pong-t'ae (陰奉泰), Han T'ae-gyo (韓台敎), and Pak Chŏng-guk (朴鼎國). And Yi Tong-sŭng was elected as the first leader in May 1895. (See Ch'a Chae-myŏng, ed. *Op. cit.*, 27.) Ch'a and D. L. Gifford wrote that seven people were baptized. But Moffett and Moore wrote that eight men were baptized (See S. F. Moore to F. F. Ellinwood, Feb. 27, 1894.) Han T'ae-gyo was from Anak, Hwanghae province.

The P'yŏngyang Presbyterian Church started with eight baptized members and two catechumens in January 1894. Two men were about forty years old and the others were between 20 and 30. They were “a praying band given to earnest study of God’s Word.”¹¹

Song In-sŏ

Song In-sŏ (宋麟瑞), who became one of the first ordained Presbyterian ministers in 1907, became converted in 1894 and baptized in 1895 by S. A. Moffett. Mr. Song was born in P'yŏngyang in 1867. As he was fond of study from his childhood, he studied Confucian literature. But he lost his father. In his twenties he wandered as a loafer and practiced Buddhism and Taoism.

In 1893 he heard that American missionaries came to the city and some Koreans became Christians. He visited a Christian friend of his, and asked him “what business he had to spoil people with that foreign doctrines, and of what use was it to him to throw away Confucianism.”¹² In June 1893 he went to the Christian preaching-house with the intention of abusing the foreigners. But Moffett’s cordial reception embarrassed him. Song looked over some books on the table, and found that “they were written with the purpose of deceiving people and making them become Christians.” Yet Song received a Christian tract and scriptures from Moffett.

Fearing to be ridiculed by other people, Song put those books away without reading. But during the rainy season of the summer, being once very lonesome, he thought of the Christian books and read them. He easily understood what was said in them, and “thought that everything was right.” Thus he became much interested in Christianity. But a teacher of “ch’aryŏk”—a Taoist practice, which taught how, by the use of certain medicinal tonic, to obtain supernatural

He worked for the spreading of the gospel in northern Hwanghae province. (D. L. Gifford, *A Forward Mission Movement in North Korea* (New York: Foreign Missions Library, 1898), 10.)

¹¹ Soon Sin Sang-ho (申尙昊) and U Chi-ryong (禹志龍) joined the church. Around the China-Japan War of 1894, Kim Tu-hyŏng (金斗炯), Chŏng Ik-no (鄭益魯), Pak Chŏng-ch’an (朴禎燦), Han Pyŏng-jik (韓秉稷), Kang Yu-hun (康有勳), Kim Ŭng-ju (金鷹周), Yi Yŏng-ŏn (李榮彦), Hong Sin-gil (洪信吉), and Yun T’ae-hŭn (尹泰欽) joined the church. Moffett reported that there were 52 baptized Korean Presbyterians in P’yong’an province in 1894, and 21 more were baptized by October 1895. (S. A. Moffett, “Evangelistic Work in Pyengyang and Vicinity, Pyengyang Station, October 1895.”)

¹² R. E. Speer, *Missionary Principle and Practice* (New York: Revell, 1902), 390. Song wrote that he met Moffett in 1892. But it was 1893.

strength, such as to be able to jump over a house—called on him. He said that the Christian doctrine was quite useless, and proposed that Song should study ch'aryōk. Song wrote later,

I thought that it would be worth while to try, and, on asking how long it would take, I learned that it does not take a smart man more than a week; otherwise, two or three weeks. I decided to try it for a week. At the end of that time, I began to feel as if I obtained so much strength that my body was lifting itself up from the floor and moving about in the air. Thus getting the impression that my teacher was right, I continued my studies for two weeks more, at the close of which I really began to feel as if I could move mountains and jump over ocean. I have to confess, though, that in a short time I was forced to find out that all this was nothing but imagination, and so I returned home.¹³

His life did not change. When he got drunk, he often resorted to the power of his fists. Mr. Han Sōk-chin knew that Mr. Song had received the Christian books without a sincere intention to believe in Jesus. Han persuaded Song to believe in Jesus and visited him over a period of several months. Han explained him about sin and judgment, telling that if he did not repent of his sins, he should have to undergo an everlasting punishment. Song was frightened.

He was gradually awakened and moved to the sincere belief. He gave up all the books of Buddhism and Taoism that he had revered. He always said that he had studied all things for death in the past. Whenever he met somebody, he preached, “Bear the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and not to take it off for a moment. His cross saves our body and soul from the hell. He will deliver you if you believe in him.” When the 1894 War broke out, he took refuge in Hanchōn. He preached the Gospel to the people of the town. A congregation of 100 was formed and they erected a chapel.¹⁴

Song was converted from Buddhism and Taoism in early 1894. So his message focused on the salvation of the body and soul from sin and hell. His concern for eternal life was fulfilled by belief in the Christian doctrines about resurrection and eternal blessings in heaven.

Mr. Song was one of the persecuted Christians during the “P'yōngyang Persecution Incident” in May 1894.¹⁵ When the local officers found his name on the church rolls, they beat him severely and imprisoned him. Moffett said about him in 1907, “Elder Song had declared himself a Christian after a beating received at the prayer meeting in 1894, when the persecution

¹³ R. E. Speer, *Missionary Principle and Practice*, 391.

¹⁴ Yi Yōng-ūn, “Kyohoe t'ongsin,” *KS* (Dec. 9, 1897), 294.

¹⁵ See D. L. Gifford to F. F. Ellinwood, May 13 & Aug. 13, 1894; H. N. Allen to F. F. Ellinwood, June 12, 1894; Graham Lee, “General Report of the Pyeng Yang Station for 1894;” Rosetta S. Hall, *The Life of Rev. William James Hall* (1897), 272-81; D. L. Gifford, *A Forward Mission Movement in North Korea*, 8-16; Kim Sūng-t'ae, “1894nyōn P'yōngyang kidokkyoin pakhae sagōn,” *Han'guk kidokkyosa yōngu* (Aug. 1987), 19-22; Yi Tōk-chu, *Nara ūi Tongnip Kyohoe ūi Tongnip*, 78-87.

was inaugurated. He too was tied with the red cord, which meant that his crime was one worthy of death. He has for several years been an itinerating evangelist.”¹⁶

After the incident, Song persistently preached the gospel to the people of Hanchŏn, and gathered a group of believers over a year.¹⁷ He was baptized in late 1895. He worked as one of Moffett’s helpers. Song confessed to Speer when he visited P’yŏngyang in 1897.

In the spring of A. D. 1895 I began to feel God’s call and my duty to go to my native town and preach the gospel there. Being zealous for the growth of the church, I preached to everybody, and on Sundays held meetings, where I tried to explain the Bible. At Pyeng Yang I went to the missionaries’ Bible classes, and, as my knowledge in the Bible grew more and more, my faith became stronger and stronger. I was very much troubled that my parents and my own family did not believe, but the loving Lord heard my prayers, and our whole family became God’s children.¹⁸

Song entered the seminary in 1902. He was ordained as one of the first Presbyterian ministers in 1907. His first pastoral work was caring for the South Gate Church and nine other groups in the Western Circuit with Pang Ki-ch’ang under the oversight of W. L. Swallen.¹⁹ His conversion might have influenced Kim Chong-sŏp and other Taoist men in P’yŏngyang.

Kim Chong-sŏp

Kim Chong-sŏp (金鍾燮, 1862-1940) first heard the Good News through Han Sŏk-chin in 1894 and was baptized by S. A. Moffett in 1895 and became a leader (yŏngsu: unordained elder) of the church. He preached the Gospel to Kil Sŏn-ju and other religious friends and led them to the church.²⁰ They became converted to Christianity through Kim Chong-sŏp around 1895 and became the core group of the Christians in P’yŏngyang.²¹ Kim became a “helper” (unordained assistant minister or evangelist) in 1896 and was ordained as the first elder of P’yŏngyang Presbyterian Church in 1899 and worked with its helper Kil Sŏn-ju. Kim was

¹⁶ S. A. Moffett, “An Educated Ministry in Korea,” *Men and the Modern Missionary Enterprise*, 140.

¹⁷ S. A. Moffett, “Pyeng Yang Station Report, Oct. 1895.”

¹⁸ R. E. Speer, *Missionary Principle and Practice*, 392.

¹⁹ W. L. Swallen, “Narrative Report of Rev. W. L. Swallen for October, November, December, 1907,” *KMF* (March 1908), 43.

²⁰ They were Kim Sŏng-t’aik (金聖澤), Ok Kyŏng-suk (玉敬淑), Chŏng Ik-no (鄭益魯), Yi Chae-p’ung (李載豐), Kil Sŏn-ju (吉善宙), Kim Ch’an-sŏng (金燦星) and others.

²¹ Later Kil Sŏn-ju, Kim Sŏng-t’aik, Kim Ch’an-sŏng, and Yi Chai-p’ung became ministers; Oak Kyŏng-suk, Paik Won-guk and Chŏng Ik-no became elders; and Chŏng Yun-jo became a deacon.

ordained as a pastor in 1911 and ministered in a small country church near P'yŏngyang until his retirement in 1926.

Kim was a religious man. In childhood he received a Confucian education. When he was 18, his father died. He left home and visited Buddhist monks, Taoist hermits, and Confucian scholars to know the truth of life. He studied various classics and practiced Taoist breathing, gymnastics and abstention from grains. For five years he also studied geomancy, medicine and charms. People called him a “toin” (a spiritual practitioner). He married in 1884 and got a job at a bookstore. He fathered twins. His life seemed smooth. But his two children, wife, and mother died within three years. His inner spiritual investigation continued in sleepless nights. He made his own incantation formula with 86 Chinese letters and chanted it every night.

In this world of *Sabba*, in the South of Manchuria, in the nation of Chosŏn, in South P'yŏng'an Province, in P'yŏngyang a resident, Kim Chong-sŏp, born in 1862, dares to pray with sincerity one hundred times bowing, to the gods of heaven and earth; Although having sins of the past, as I am immediately awakened and repenting, and determine to correct evil doings and do good deeds, Oh! Bright heavenly god, please love and pity me, bless me with happiness and prosperity, so that I may accomplish the way of humanity. Although I am not worthy to pray to you, please hear my incantation and remember my humble mind day and night.²²

He was a humble seeker. He spent the day without talking. He wanted to live a life of sincerity. He had prayed his incantation to *Hananim*, the traditional supreme god, for several years. Finally he gained a spiritual peace to some extent with this prayer. Now people respected him as a “kiin” (a mysterious person) who could exercise supernatural power. Such a rumor attracted a group of young Taoists who were interested in spirituality. They were Kim Sŏng-t'aik, Oak Kyŏng-suk, Chŏng Yun-jo, Paik Won-guk, Chŏng Ik-no, Yi Chai-p'ung, and Kil Sŏn-ju. He settled down with remarriage and sons and daughters were born. Nevertheless, he was not satisfied with his spiritual life. He retreated into Buddhist temples for several months and prayed to the Big Dipper.

In 1891 S. A. Moffett came from Seoul to P'yŏngyang with Sŏ Sang-ryun. Kim met Sŏ to assess his scholarship. He found that Christians were not ignorant but intelligent. In 1893 Moffett came to P'yŏngyang to open a station with his helper Han Sŏk-chin of Ŭiju. As Han had a

²² Kim Wha-sik, “Kim Chong-sŏp moksa yakchŏn,” *Sinang sekye* (June 1940), 22.

Confucian family background, Kim could carry on a comfortable conversation with him. Han gave him Christian tracts to read. He occasionally attended the chapel to explore Christianity. Nevertheless he could not understand Christian doctrines such as redemption and revelation. If one washed himself with the blood of Jesus, might he become polluted with the blood? How could God, a spirit, give the Ten Commandments to people? Han gave him a Chinese New Testament to read. He found that the contents were filled with false and unreliable stories. The Book of Revelation was beyond understanding. One day he visited Moffett with his friend Chŏng Ik-no to learn what attitude Moffett had toward Korean religions. He asked Moffett about the virtue of filial piety.

Kim and Chŏng: Is it right to revere parents with filial piety?

Moffett: Of course, reverence of parent with filial piety is God's commandment.

Kim and Chŏng: Do you, Rev. Ma, have parents and revere them?

Moffett: I have my parents and I revere them much.

Kim and Chŏng: You forsook your parents and came to Korea, ten thousand miles away from them. Is this filial piety?

Moffett: Brothers, which is filial piety, obeying the words of parents or disobeying them?

Kim and Chŏng: Of course, obeying them is filial piety.

Moffett: My parents said to me, "Go to Korea and preach the Jesus Doctrine."²³

His misunderstanding of Christianity began to disappear. His spiritual journey through Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism found its final resting place in Christianity in 1894. His resettlement in Christianity did not require a dramatic experience. His conversion was a gradual transformation. His old religions merged with Christianity in a mystical way with neither an alchemic elixir nor physical practices, but through the Holy Spirit.

There was continuity between Korean religions and Christianity, which fulfilled his searching for the truth. His first point of contact was his belief in *Hanānim*. In his first prayer to God at the church, he experienced the Holy Spirit.

I have known and worshipped the greatest and the holiest *Hanānim* who is the omnipresent and omnipotent god. Therefore, when I first knelt before God, my heart was filled with humility and my body trembled. I prayed with true heart and sincerity. I did not know that my body was in heaven or on earth. I was so filled with inspiration that I felt myself under a big mountain. When I finished the

²³ Kim Wha-sik, op. cit.; Yi Tŏk-chu, "Kim Chong-sŏp," *Han'guk kŭrisŭdoindŭlŭi kaejong iyagi*, 55.

prayer, my body was hot and my voice was changed. I experienced the transformation of the Holy Spirit. I was filled with joy.²⁴

It was his first mysterious experience of “transformation,” which he had expected to have for a long time. At the Christian chapel, he experienced a mysterious union with God or a supernatural “transformation,” which Taoism promised.

His aspiration for union with God was the second point of contact with Christianity. One day in 1901, when he was reading and meditating on the Passion of Jesus, he fell asleep. In a dream he was fervently preaching to hundreds of people. When he awoke at dawn, his eyes were filled with joyful tears. He went out and could not help but dance in delight. He stopped smoking in remembrance of his experience of the mystic dream. He became a man of tears. He wept for an old beggar in the street; for women missionaries who had left their hometowns; for his late mother who died without faith; and for the sins of the world. He wept in thinking of Jesus’ Passion and the Apostles’ devotion; he wept at the meal table or in bed. His tears were the result of his joyful union with Christ.

Kim Chong-söp found the third point of contact between Christianity and Confucianism in the doctrines of self-cultivation and perfection. In 1897 he was writing a tract on “the relation or difference between Confucianism and Christianity.”²⁵ Confucianism argued that evil was not an innate being, but a perverted order of original humanity. In the Confucian sense, *concupiscence* was the diametrical perversion of *Ch’önmyōng*. Confucian scholarship focused on the sincere study of the heart-mind or the principle of human nature, and on the practice of self-cultivation for the clear and right heart. Kim emphasized this point in 1897-98. He stated that what obscured the originally given righteous and wise mind was “mul-yok” (private desire for secular things). Human beings lost their God-given good nature by their selfish desires.²⁶

²⁴ Kim Wha-sik, op. cit., 36-7.

²⁵ J. H. Wells to F. F. Ellinwood, March 1, 1897. It is not certain whether his tract was published or not.

²⁶ Kim Chong-söp, “Editorial,” *KS* (October 4, 1897); “Haksik ūi yoginhan ron,” *KS* (Dec., 2 & 7, 1897); “Editorial,” *KS* (Sep. 1, 1898).

In sum, Kim Chong-söp was a Taoist-Confucian Christian. His Taoist-Confucian monotheism, mysticism, and moralism merged with those of Christianity. His leadership and spirituality contributed to the foundation of the P'yöngyang Presbyterian Church, ministered by S. A. Moffett and Graham Lee. Not only missionaries' evangelicalism, but also Korean Christian leaders' spirituality cultivated in the soil of Korean religions enriched the early Korean Church.

Kil Sön-ju

Kil Sön-ju (吉善宙, 1869-1936), one of the first seven Presbyterian ministers and the leader of the 1907 Great Revival, was once a Taoist. He believed that there must be a Great Being somewhere, and that a lost line of communication must surely exist. He read the books of Confucius, but there was no answer; then he tried Taoism, which read: "The name that can be uttered is not the Eternal Name; the way that can be walked is not the Eternal Way."²⁷

Led by such passages he and two of his companions became Taoists. ... In the performance of their sacred rites, they frequently visited the hills for one hundred days of prayer. In the quiet of the pines and by the side of gurgling water, these three spirits united in an unconquerable effort to find out God. It was a long season of fasting these hundred days, with only nourishment enough to keep alive. Thin, wan and gaunt, they prayed on and on if by any means they might find God. The long nights came when sleep must be conquered and prayer kept going if they would attain to the Eternal One. Out in the piercing wind they prayed still with the shadows all about them, hoping, little by little, to rise into the quiet region where the heart would ache no more. Kil was the leader in this fierce exercise of the soul. Often he poured cold water over his head to expel the insidious onset of sleep. Night after night, with the despair of the drowning, they held on, "O God! O God! O God!" It was a long hopeless struggle. True, there were times of quiet in the soul and intimations of peace, but the finding was still beyond them. So the long vigils were kept up and the praying continued, till in each case the hundred days were over.²⁸

Kil learned Taoism from age 21 to 29. First he learned two short incantations to the Three Spirits (三靈) of the *Jade Book* (玉經) from Chang Tük-han of P'yöngyang. He had recited them ten thousand times in lonely spots of the mountain or in a quiet room for 21 days or 49 days or 100 days for years. He dedicated himself to the life of prayers, meditation, fasts and vigils. Sometimes he heard the sound of a jade flute or gunshots during the prayer, and his body sitting with legs

²⁷ J. S. Gale, *Korea in Transition* (1909), 82. Ch'oi P'yöng-hön criticized later corruption of Taoism from Laozi's original Taoism expressed in *The Daodejing*. Ch'oi argued that "Whenever Saint Laozi told the deep and mysterious way, he always pointed to the truth of God." (Choi P'yöng-hön, *Syöngsan myönggyöng* (1909), 54.)

²⁸ J. S. Gale, "Elder Kil," *MRW* (July 1907), 493.

crossed jumped into the air to the height of several feet for a moment. He communicated with the spirits in heaven. He taught the incantations to his wife and they prayed together at midnight with trembling. They became more healthy by praying, and their faith in the power of the incantations deepened. He mastered several physical practices such as a method of enhancing the physical strength by taking medical tonic and physical exercise or sexual techniques for “the conception of heroic figures.” He was known as a spiritual practitioner, a stange person, or a muscular man. When he learned prayers and practices from Kim Ch’an-sōng, they worshipped *Shangti* every morning at the altar to the Big Dipper.

When the China-Japan War scattered the P’yōngyang citizens into deep corners of the country, Kil experienced the sad fate of a weak nation and his inability to help the people in the face of the international war. He began to search the national dimension of religion beyond pessimism toward the mundane world and individualistic spirituality. He realized that Taoism was missing something for the nation. When he returned to P’yōngyang in the spring of 1896, his friend Kim Chong-sōp had been converted to Christianity. “What,” said Kil, “do you mean to say that you have forsaken the faith that we have labored for so long?” Kim said, “But I’ve found what we sought.” Kil answered, “No, it is false. I will have none of it.” But he stayed on, and Kim was quiet and did not argue. He gave Kil *The Two Friends* to read. When he read it, Kim visited him and recommended that he pray to God. Kil replied,

I have made incantations of “Nine Spirits and Three Souls” (九靈三精) of the *Jade Book* as well as incantations of “Three Spirits,” and worshipped the holy name of the “Three Heavenly Ones” (三天尊). The “Three Heavenly Ones” are “Highest Heavenly Jewel Spirit” (上天靈寶天尊), “Great Pure Morality” (太清道德天尊), and “Thunderbolt Universal Transformer” (雷聲普化天尊). We call the three-persons-in-unity “Nine Heavens Great Beginning Thunderbolt Universal Transforming Heavenly One” (九天應元雷聲普化天尊), which is like one’s name, courtesy name or title. The name of the triune Three Heavenly Ones or Three-Spirits-God-King (三靈神君) is similar to the Christian Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, isn’t it? As I have worshipped the Triune *Shangti*—Three Heavenly Ones or Three-Spirits-God-King, why do I need to pray to a Christian God, *Hanānim*?²⁹

²⁹ Kil Ch’in-gyōng, *Yōnggye Kil Sōn-ju*, 70. See Yi Nūng-wha, *Chosōn togyosa*, trans. by Yi Ching-ūn (Seoul: Posōng, 1986), 266; Kim in-sō, “Chosōn ch’odai kyohoe ūi wigōl Yōnggye sōnsaing sojōn sang,” *Sinhak jinam* (Nov. 1931), 40. Cf. Some Chinese and Korean hymns translated “Jesus Savior of the world” into “耶蘇普世大君.” (H. G. Underwood ed., *Ch’angyangga* (Yokohama: Seishi Bunsha, 1894), 44.) Yet J.

Then Kim advised Kil to pray to the Three-Spirits-God-King that he might know whether Christianity was a true way or a false way. Kil prayed to the Taoist triune god everyday. His prayers evolved into the struggles to know which was the true way, Christianity or Taoism. Kim gave him *Pilgrim's Progress* to read. Kil was impressed by the stories. Nevertheless, he could neither know who the Christian God was nor have faith in Jesus. Kim Chong-söp visited him again and suggested that he might pray to the Christian God.

Kim: What was the result of your prayer to the Three-Spirits-God-King?
 Kil: Prayers to him brought only agonies and struggles.
 Kim: Then pray to the Heavenly Father.
 Kil: How on earth can I call the holiest *Shangti* as Father?
 Kim: Well, call him *Shangti* and pray to him.
 Kil: Sure, I will try.³⁰

Kil was amazed at the repose of Kim's soul. Kil fixed his gaze upon him. "My eyes burned into his every action, his downsitting and his uprising, his sleeping, his waking. As the days deepened a horror overcame me, for I saw that he had won. What could I do but resort to the old method of prayer, this time in the name of Jesus."³¹ Kil prayed to *Shangti* at midnight and at dawn that he might find the peace of mind through the knowledge of the true God.

By degrees the rope that I had held to so persistently was parting, strand by strand, with my soul dangling over the abyss. Into the region of the lost I entered, where there are no words to depict the agony. It was the seventh night and I fell into a half slumber, worn out and hopeless. How long passed I know not, but in the darkness I was suddenly awakened by a loud call, "Kil Sun-ju!" my name, and the echo was repeated. When I sat up, bewildered, I saw before me a mysterious something—what shall I call it? The room itself became transfigured, and a glorious light shone all about me. Rest and forgiveness settled over my soul, and a tenderness, too. That manifested itself in many tears. Now that I look back I say, "Oh, the joy of it! All my prayers were answered and God, whom I had sought through years of agony, was found at last. I was home in my Father's house, redeemed, forgiven."³²

Later Kim In-sö described the Kil's mysterious encounter with God as follows:

No sooner had he prayed to Shangti that he might know if Jesus was the true Savior of the world than the sound of a clear jade flute and loud gunshots shook the room. Then he heard a voice from heaven. "Kil Sön-ju! Kil Sön-ju! Kil Sön-ju!" As he was frightened at the voice, he knelt down and

S. Gale argued that "Some scholars in China think they find in its [Taoist] teaching a relation to the Hebrew Bible and intimation of the Trinity, but Koreans see no such resemblance, and it is a dead cult as far as the peninsula is concerned." (J. S. Gale, *Korea in Transition*, 82.)

³⁰ Kil Chin-gyöng, *Yönggye Kil Sön-ju*, 71.

³¹ J. S. Gale, "Elder Kil," 494.

³² Ibid.

said, "My loving Father, please forgive my sin and save my life."³³

His mouth opened and he referred to the Taoistic "Shangti" as Christian "Father" for the first time. He wept loudly for his sin. His body was burning like a bundle of fire with the fervor of prayer of repentance. Soon the peace of God dominated his mind. His heart was filled with joy. "With nothing but his poor blind Taoist gropings and his hungry heart he came to God, and at once was taken 'far ben,' to the inner chambers of the Divine Presence." He met the transfigured Christ and saw the glorious light of the personal God like St. Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration. The traditional laws and Taoist prophets disappeared, and only Jesus was present before him. Or it was like St. Paul's encounter with the glorious Christ on his way to Damascus. As the light entered Kil's soul little by little his eyesight failed him, and he went blind. Like Paul it would seem that he was shut out for a time and separated from the distracting influence of the eye, that he might be shut in with God. His external history read, "Once he could see but now is blind." Strange as it may seem, he put it, "Once I was blind but now I see."³⁴ He was baptized by Graham Lee with 28 other Christians on August 15, 1897.³⁵ He was elected as a leader in the spring of 1898. Kil's spirituality and preaching influenced the Korean Church in its life of worship, Sabbath keeping, offering, vocal prayer, meditation, contemplation, reading and memorizing the Scriptures, and especially the dawn-breaking prayer meeting.

Kil participated in the P'yöngyang branch of the Independence Club with Yang Chöŉn-baek and others in 1898.³⁶ His religious devotion did not lose its nationalistic concern.³⁷ His

³³ Kil Chin-gyöŉng, op. cit., 72; Kim In-sö, op. cit., 47-8. Kil's unique conversion experience was introduced to the American Sunday school textbook as a case similar to that of Cornelius in the Acts 10.

³⁴ J. S. Gale, "Elder Kil," 493-5.

³⁵ Kil Chin-gyöŉng, op. cit., 87. Yet Bernheisel wrote that Kil was baptized on July 12, 1897. (C. F. Bernheisel, "Rev. Kil Sunju," *KMF* (Feb. 1936), 29.) Dr. Wells wrote, "There were too many interesting and touching incidents to mention, but the Communion service, last Sunday, in which 19 were received as catechumens and 29 baptized, was the most tender and touching service we have had. Mr. Speer prayed in English." (H. H. Wells to F. F. Ellinwood, Aug. 17, 1897). Thus Kil was baptized on August 15, 1897. Mr. R. E. Speer and Mr. Grant from New York attended the service. See Part IV. Ch. 2.

³⁶ Kil Chin-gyöŉng, op. cit., 95. Kil Chin-gyöŉng wrote that An Ch'ang-ho and Kil Söŉn-ju organized the branch with 15 other founders, and Kil Söŉn-ju was appointed as the head of the department of judicial affairs. The P'yöngnag branch actively supported the Club in 1898. About 5,000 people gathered at its first mass meeting, according to Kil Chin-gyöŉng, where Kil and An Ch'ang-ho delivered speeches.

Christian faith was an amalgamation of pietism and nationalism, or evangelical and Taoist holistic approach. In 1902 at the age of thirty-three, Kil was ordained as an elder by A. J. Brown, and entered the theological seminary in 1903. His later activities and apologetics will be examined in Chapter 2.

As seen above, merchants and the newly rising middle class in P'yŏngyang were converted to Christianity in 1893-94, and soon a Taoist group—Song In-sŏ, Kim Chong-sŏp, Kil Sŏn-ju and others, joined the Church. They became the nucleus of the rapid growing Presbyterian churches in North Korea, centered in P'yŏngyang. Especially the converted Taoist-Christians were the key figures in the Korean leadership. At the same time, we must remember that behind them there were S. A. Moffett and Graham Lee who accepted those Taoists into the Christian Church and tolerated their leadership. Although Moffett forbade them from drinking, smoking, polygamy, and ancestor and spirit worship, he was not a missionary scholar or theologian who had drawn the line between Taoism and Christianity, but a missionary minister *par excellence* who helped the spiritual growth of the Korean seekers and converts. Although many historians have regarded Moffett as one of the most conservative missionaries in Korea, he had a tolerant attitude toward Korea religions at least in his earlier years in P'yŏngyang. His open-minded pastoral care enabled the Korean Taoists to become interested in Christianity and finally to become the leading workers of the Korean Church.

2. From Shamanism to Christianity

Paik Sa-gyŏm

Paik Sa-gyŏm (1860-1940) was a famous blind sorcerer. Yet his inner spirituality had searched for the true Way with prayers for eighteen years. In early 1897 a colporteur gave him a tract, *Leading the Family in the Right Way*. When he heard its content from his wife, he decided to give up fortune telling and divinations. He devoted himself to learning and memorizing of the

³⁷ See Kim In-soo, *Protestants and the Formation of Modern Korean Nationalism, 1885-1920: A Study of the Contributions of Horace G. Underwood and Sun Chu Kil* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 109-23.

Scriptures and the hymns through the help of his wife. He was baptized by C. F. Reid on May 2, 1897. In 1899 he was in charge of the Bible depot at Koyang and his daily preaching attracted a crowd. He became “a prime mover in the establishment of one of the strongest churches” in the Songdo district and a powerful Methodist evangelist who gave many people sight.³⁸

An Chong-ch'an

In 1897 there were two other conversions of famous sorcerers. An Chong-ch'an was also a famous *p'ansu*. When he heard the gospel of Jesus, he repented his sin of tempting and deceiving of numerous people. “Now he believes in Jesus and has become a new person. He says, ‘My eye is blind, yet my heart is bright.’ He changed his name into “Kögwang,” which means dwelling in the light,” and preaches from house to house.” Mr. Ch'a Si-hyön was a famous *p'ungsu* through the country. People believed that he had a spiritual eye to see one's future. He prophesized that there should be imminent disasters in Korea, and moved from a deep valley to another auspicious place with his family. Yet when he believed in Jesus, he repented his sins that he had committed for being deceived by himself. He moved to P'yöngyang to teach his children.³⁹

Whang Pöm-o

Another famous converted blind sorcerer was Whang Pöm-o of Taigu. When he was three years old, small pox made him blind. At ten he lost both parents by cholera. His uncle had the boy taught the art of sorcery. Like Paik, he made money in this profession. In 1905 he happened to hear Bruen's helper preach the gospel. He was impressed with the message.

He agued with the helper for two days. At last he was convinced of the truthfulness of the Gospel, and became a believer. Whang began to attend the church, but continued to practise his art of divination, for it was a very lucrative profession. Week after week, however, as he understood the doctrine of the Gospel more fully, he began to have a greater distaste for his work. At length one day when requested to attend a certain house he refused, and broke all his instruments before the eyes of those who came to fetch him.⁴⁰

³⁸ Mrs. Josephine P. Campbell, “Korean Mission,” *WMA* (Nov. 1898), 138; “Elymas as Evangelist,” *BARBFBS for 1900*, 280; “As Blind, yet Giving many Sight,” *BARBFBS for 1905*, 278; Pak So-ch'ön, *Sumün pobai*, (Seoul: Tongyang söngyohoe sönggyöl gyohoe ch'ulp'anbu, 1938).

³⁹ “Hoejung sinmun,” *KH* (March 10, 1897), 24.

⁴⁰ George T. B. Davis, “Five Hundred Miles' Pilgrimage for a Bible,” *BW* (Oct. 1910), 302-3.

Bruen told him that in America they had a blind man's Bible. Whang's longing to learn to read God's Word let him invent his own system to read by adapting the arithmetical tablets used by blind sorcerers. He made strings of thousand pieces of tins and small wooden blocks, which indicated various letters of the Korean alphabet. With this crude system of reading, he memorized the first six chapters of St. John's Gospel. In 1909 he heard that there was a school for teaching the blind to read in a wonderful manner at P'yöngyang. He walked a "five hundred miles' pilgrimage" to learn how to read. He mastered the New York point system in a month in Mrs. Moffett's school and learned to read the blind man's Bible.⁴¹

Mudangs

A most powerful conversion event was a converted sorceress's ceremony of burning of the instruments before the town people. In 1896 Graham Lee reported about a Korean colporteur. "On Christmas Day he had the pleasure of throwing all the house-gods out of the house of one of those women called *mutangs*—devil-worshippers, as you know. This had such an effect on the village people that half the village of fifteen houses cleared out their house-gods also, and now the Gospel has a firm hold there."⁴²

At Paekch'ön in March 1897, Kim Man-bo, a husband of a newly possessed *mudang*, asked the church to expel the devil from her and the believers prayed for her and preached the holy gospel at the chapel for a week. When she was cured, she burned all the fetishes and pictures at her house with other believers.⁴³ At Sunan in 1897, a *p'ungsu* sorcerer or a geomancer burned all his books and destroyed his instruments as the token of his repentance of the deceitful life. When a *p'ansu* or a blind sorcerer heard the gospel from Graham Lee, he repented his sin immediately and said that he had committed more sins than others, thus he might be saved only if he devoted

⁴¹ Edwin Kagin, "The Blind Chungnim," KMF (August 1909), 146-7; Cf. Rosetta S. Hall, "Education of the Blind in Korea," WMF (Sep. 1908), 305-7.

⁴² ARBFS for 1897, 243.

⁴³ "Hoejyung sinmun," KH (April 28, 1897), 58.

himself to Christ. He gave his drum and books to Rev. Lee.⁴⁴ In 1898 a *mudang* and others in Songdo discarded all their custom of worshipping the evil spirits.⁴⁵

In 1904 Mrs. Alice F. Moffett reported that “a woman fifty years old, who was a sorceress, recently gave up all her evil practices, declared that she would be a Christian, and requested the Christian women to come to her house and clear it of all the devil’s instruments which she had used so long.”⁴⁶ In 1906, a thirteen-year old *mudang* destroyed her “devil house,” which she had kept for seven years and all her family and some neighbors joined the church at Sunan. At Koch’ang, near P’yŏngyang, a sorcerer destroyed a Taoist shrine consecrated to the god of the Big Dipper, burned its picture, and offered the palace for a Christian chapel.⁴⁷ A fortuneteller, when she had a mind to believe in Jesus, sold her books and in course time was baptized. Yet she realized that she had done wrong and wanted to get the books back again and burn them. “After some trouble she succeeded in buying the books back and wanted to burn them, but the missionary asked her to give them to her, which she did.”⁴⁸ Some of the converted sorcerers and sorceresses became local evangelists or Bible Women. They were efficient demolishers of the household fetishes.⁴⁹

3. From Confucianism to Christianity

As Chapter 2 will deal with Choi Pyŏng-hŏn’s fulfillment theory and Yun Ch’i-ho’s understanding of Confucianism, this section reviews some other Korean Christian leaders’ conversion cases from Confucianism to Christianity—Yang Chŏn-baek, Kim Yong-ha, Yi Tong-hwi, Rhee Syng-man and other political leaders who were converted in the Seoul Prison in 1904-05, and Shin Sŏk-ku.

Yang Chŏn-baek

⁴⁴ Li Yŏng-ŏn, “Kyohoe t’ongsin,” *KS* (Sept. 9, 1897), 194-5.

⁴⁵ “Chyangno gyohoe nyŏnwhanhoe,” *KS* (Nov. 3, 1898), 421.

⁴⁶ Mrs. S. A. Moffett, “The Ministry of Prayer,” *KF* (Feb. 1905), 237.

⁴⁷ Kim Li-do, “Sunan raesin,” Li Yun-mo, “P’yŏngyang Koch’ang raesin,” *KS* (April 26, 1906), 402-3.

⁴⁸ Mattie Ingold Tate, “Mrs. Oh, or ‘Pang Mony’s Grandmother,” *Missionary* (April 1908), 167.

⁴⁹ Li Sayŏn, “Tŏkch’ŏn raesin,” *KS* (Sept. 20, 1906), 910.

Yang Chŏn-baek (梁旬伯, 1870-1933), the youngest of the first seven Presbyterian ministers ordained in 1907, yet “the best scholar of them all,” became a Christian in 1893.⁵⁰ He was good at writing Chinese poems and essays from the age of fifteen. In his twenties he became a well-known Confucian scholar at Kusŏng. When he was a teacher at a private school, Kim Kwan-gŭn of Ŭiju, one of his friends preached to him the Jesus Doctrine and persuaded him to attend the theological class held in Seoul in December of 1892.⁵¹ He found that Christianity and Western civilization had something valuable to adopt. He changed his curriculum at the school. “When he returned home from Seoul, he began to teach both the Korean language and the Christian Scriptures to the children. He observed every Sunday with a group of twenty friends. He seemed to be a Christian, but in reality he was a Confucianist.”⁵² He taught both Confucian classics and Christian scriptures at his classroom. He appeared to be a Christian. Nevertheless, in his inner being he was still a Confucianist. This dual identity continued for about nine months. There was no serious conflict between Confucianism and Christianity, because he understood that the two were in continuity and complimented each other.

He met S. A. Moffett again at Sŏnch’ŏn in the fall of 1893 when Moffett visited the North, and was baptized by him.⁵³ Yang went to Ŭiju to attend the training class, led by Moffett, in March of 1894, and again to Seoul in December 1894.⁵⁴ In October, 1895, Moffett wrote:

Sak Ju—I can give a much brighter picture although this field also has suffered much from lack of personal oversight and direction. The war broke up our school there, so that when the school teacher, Mr. Yang, reported to me in the winter I arranged to send him out as a colporteur giving special attention to the work at Kou Syeng and at Sak Ju, giving two Sundays a month to the former, one to the latter and one Sunday to be spent in other villages selling books and making known the gospel. He

⁵⁰ S. A. Moffett, “An Educated Ministry in Korea,” *Men and the Modern Missionary Enterprise Conference, 1907*, 139.

⁵¹ D. L. Gifford to F. F. Ellinwood, Dec. 3, 1892; S. F. Moore to F. F. Ellinwood, Dec. 6, 1892; Ch’a Chai-myŏng, ed. op. cit., 13. Thirteen Korean leaders and helpers attended this 1892 theological class, and S. A. Moffett and D. L. Gifford taught them. “They spend their whole time in the study of the Bible itself, and Mr. Moffett says it is remarkable how much of the Scripture they have on their tongues end.”

⁵² “Chosŏn kyohoe ch’odai ch’il moksa,” *Kejassi* (Sept. 1937), 30; Yi Tŏk-chu, “Yang Chŏn-baek,” *Han’guk kŭrisŭdoindŭlŭi kaejong iyagi*, 257-8.

⁵³ S. F. Moore to F. F. Ellinwood, Nov. 28, 1893; S. A. Moffett, “An Educated Ministry in Korea,” 139.

⁵⁴ In March 1894 Moffett taught the Gospel of Luke with a class of twelve at Ŭiju for 15 days. They came “from the surrounding 75 miles.” Mr. Yang probably attended this class. (S. A. Moffett to F. F. Ellinwood, march 16, 1894)

was thus employed with the sanction of the station ... Several years acquaintance with him as a school teacher and contact with him as a student in three successive training classes led me to think very highly of him and to expect good result from his work.⁵⁵

As Yang's school was destroyed during the China-Japan War, Moffett appointed him as a colporteur in 1895. Probably his experience of the War and the defeat of China by Japan let him move to the next step in his Christian belief—that of becoming a colporteur. It was a difficult transition for a Confucian scholar to become a traveling bookseller. However, his scholarship was combined with enthusiasm for souls. He established Sinsi Church at Kusŏng in 1895.

In 1897 Yang was appointed as N. C. Whittemore's helper and traveled with him from P'yŏngyang to Ŭiju in 1897 and 1898 several times. He became the chief native agent in the wonderful work around Sŏnch'ŏn.⁵⁶ He visited major towns almost every month. "He has much alpine-climbing in his circuit, but his zeal and self-denying labors have been richly blessed."⁵⁷ He himself rejoiced in working in North P'yŏng'an province which he thought was "a region of darkness." For example, through his evangelism, Kim Chun-gŏn of Wiwŏn was converted in 1897 and became a founding member of the Ŭiju-ŭp Church.⁵⁸ Cho Kyu-ch'an, a Confucian scholar of Sŏnch'ŏn, was converted to Christianity and became one of the first three deacons in 1897.⁵⁹ And Pang Wŏn-tae became the first believer at Ch'ŏlsan in May of 1897. He preached the gospel despite frequent persecutions and a church was formed in the spring of 1898. Yang commented: "This cannot be done with the human will, but with the heavenly God's power to

⁵⁵ S. A. Moffett to F. F. Ellinwood, "evangelical Work in Eui Ju and the North, Oct, 1895."

⁵⁶ When W. C. Whittemore arrived in Korea in October 1896, he was assigned to North P'yŏng'an province with a view to opening a station there as soon as possible. He made his first trip into the territory in the spring of 1897 in company with W. M. Baird and Yang and again in the fall went with Yang. In the winter and spring of 1898, Whittemore made two trips and another in the fall with S. A. Moffett. Whittemore requested for a station at Sŏnch'ŏn where was "by far the strongest group of believers." (W. C. Whittemore to F. F. Ellinwood, Aug., 10 & Nov. 11, 1898.) In Aril 1899 he bought a fine Korean house, known afterwards as the "honey-moon" house, for a mission house or a rest house at Sŏnch'ŏn. (W. C. Whittemore to F. F. Ellinwood, April 15, 1899.) Finally in October of 1901, Dr. and Mrs. Sharrocks and Mr. Whittemore moved to Sŏnch'ŏn and occupied the "rest house." (H. A. Rhodes, ed. *History of the Korea Mission PCUSA*, vol. 1, 199.)

⁵⁷ *ARBFMPCUSA for 1898*, 157. Whittemore received 99 catechumens on the two trips to the North in 1898, yet he did not baptize any until August 1898 "although Moffett and Lee advised me to do so. I preferred to wait until I could do it more intelligently." (W. C. Whittemore to F. F. Ellinwood, Aug. 10, 1898). Thus most converts and catechumens were the results of Mr. Yang's efforts.

⁵⁸ Yang Chŏn-baek, "Kyohoe t'ongsin," *KS* (July 15, 1897), 131.

⁵⁹ Ch'a Chae-myŏng, op. cit., 41; "P'yŏngando Sŏnch'ŏn kyohoe mal," *KS* (Nov. 11, 1898), 437.

govern the human beings and transform the evil world to the good. God calls people with infinite love, governs them, and loves them as His children. As only those who are useful in this world can become useful in heaven, we must be discreet and restrain ourselves.”⁶⁰ For Mr. Yang, to become a Christian meant to become “a useful person” in the face of the national crisis or to become a person who knew “the way to live” in truth and in light personally and nationally.⁶¹

Mr. Yang participated in the movement of the Independence Club in 1898 in the department of propaganda with Rhee Syng-man and other members. The P’yŏngyang branch of the Independence Club was organized in August of 1898 and celebrated the 506th anniversary of the dynasty on September 1, 1898. It became one of the most active branches. Yang, Kil Sŏn-ju, An Ch’ang-ho and other Christian leaders organized the Club. *The Christian News* issued a letter from a Korean Christian of Ŭiju as its editorial on December 22, 1898, which charged local officials with their misdemeanors and abuses. The letter concluded that local officials should be enlightened as soon as possible so that the imperial court may be sound and complete. The editorial commented, “Alas! Greedy local officials, who have the law, are accused by the enlightened people.” *The Christian News* continuously reported the accusations of the corrupted local officials for their abuses by the “enlightened people” of Ŭiju, Sŏnch’ŏn, Ch’ŏlsan, and other towns of Northwestern Korea where Mr. Yang and other Korean leaders were working. The political and spiritual reformation progressed hand in hand in the late 1890s in North Korea. However the Club was dispersed by the government in December of 1898, and Yang was arrested with about 400 others members.⁶²

⁶⁰ Yang Chŏn-baek, ‘Kyohoe t’ongsin,’ *KS* (Oct. 13, 1898), 397. Pang Won-t’ae died of disease in the fall of 1898. At his deathbed he confessed a firm belief in heavenly blessing and exhorted neighbors, parents, and his wife to believe in God and conduct his funeral service according to the church procedure.

⁶¹ “P’yŏngando Sŏnch’ŏn kyohoe mal,” *KS* (Nov. 11, 1898), 437.

⁶² Shin Yong-ha, *Tongnip hyŏphoe yŏngu* (Seoul: Iljogak, 1976), 101-4, & 511. In 1898 the Korea Presbyterian and Methodist missions and Korean Christians earnestly supported the Independence movement. For example, a series of the editorials of *The Christian News*, edited by H. G. Underwood, fully defended the activities of the Independence Club and criticized the conservative party. (“Ronsyŏl,” *KS* (July 14, 21 & 28; Aug. 4 & 11; Oct. 13, 20, & 27; Nov. 17 & 24; Dec. 1, 8, 15 & 22, 1898.)

In November and December of 1901, Mr. Yang and Rev. George Leck, a newly appointed missionary, made a long evangelistic trip from Sŏnch'ŏn to Kanggye via Sakchu and Ch'osan along the cities of the Yalu River.⁶³ In December of 1902, Yang was ordained as the first elder in North P'yŏng'an Province.⁶⁴ The first "nal yŏnbo" (days offering) was dedicated in 1904 for personal evangelism during the Bible class in Sŏnch'ŏn.⁶⁵

Yang established elementary and middle schools for boys and girls. The Sinsŏng Middle School raised many future leaders of Korea, who were inspired by teachers' nationalism. Yang joined "Sinminhoe," a secret society for the independence of Korea, in 1907. He graduated from the seminary in 1907 and was ordained as minister. In March, 1909, he was installed as the sole pastor of the Sŏnch'ŏn city church, "with its congregation of over 2,100 people, almost the largest congregation in Korea."⁶⁶

In 1910 the students of the Sinsŏng School sent Ch'a Chae-myŏng as a "missionary" to North Kyŏngsang province and supported him with their own fund. When he came back to the city in the summer of 1911 after finishing his first year, "300 students welcomed him at the train station, sang a specially composed welcome song for him, carried him on their shoulders through the streets and praised his efforts."⁶⁷ Rev. Yang and Dr. Rhee Syng-man came to Sŏnch'ŏn on the same train after attending the YMCA summer conference held in Songdo. When the Japanese Government forged a conspiracy case in 1911, first they arrested teachers and students of the Sinsŏng School, including Rev. Yang.⁶⁸ During three years confinement in Seoul, Yang had to

⁶³ Rev. Leck, one of the most vigorous missionaries, died of smallpox at Unsan on Christmas evening. See his diary in *KF* (Feb. 1902), 17-22.

⁶⁴ *ARBFMPCUSA for 1903*, 228.

⁶⁵ C. E. Kearns, "One Year in Syen Chun Station," *AH* (Nov. 1905), 602.

⁶⁶ W. C. Whittemore, "The Korean Ministry in Our Syen Chun Field," *AH* (Nov. 1909), 514. In 1909 the Sŏnch'ŏn station had 34 theological students—25 helpers, 11 elders, 6 leaders, 2 deacons, and 1 secretary of a missionary—and produced 10 graduates of the seminary. One of the three pastors was Ch'oi Kwan-hŭl who was appointed to the missionary to Vladivostok.

⁶⁷ Rhee Syng-man, "Kisŏ," *KS* (July 30, 1911), 99.

⁶⁸ In June 1911 Mr. Yang taught about 90 students at the summer conference of the YMCA held at Korean-English School in Songdo, where Yun Ch'i-ho, Yi Sang-jae, O Kŭng-sŏn, Rhee Syng-man and others lectured. ("Kaesŏng haryŏnghoe," *KS* (July 15, 1911), 91) The students wept for the lost nation. (Chŏn T'aek-pu, "A Chwaong Yun Ch'i-ho Sŏnsaeng," in *Yun Ch'i-ho ŭi saengae wa sasang* (Seoul: Ŭlyu

make a false statement, for he could not endure inhumane tortures. When he was freed, therefore, he wanted to resign from his pastorate. Yet he was elected as chairman of the P'yŏngbuk Presbytery in 1914, and then chairman of the Assembly in 1916. He was one of the 33 signers of the March First Independence Declaration in 1919.

Yang Chŏng-baek combined Confucianism with Christianity, Confucian education and Christian education, and nationalism with enthusiasm for individual souls as well. His life was filled with sufferings for the Korean people and for the Korean Church. His sufferings were for the fulfillment by the Jesus Doctrine of the Korean religious quests and national longings.

Kim Yong-ha and Yi Tong-hwi of Kangwha

Kim Yong-ha (金容夏) of the island of Kangwha decided to join the Methodist Church in August of 1901. He was a renowned yangban and Confucian scholar on the island. He had been a practitioner of Confucianism as a religion. People respected him as a sage scholar, who quenched secular desires through self-cultivation and meditation and lived the life of a saint. He had often met Confucius and other ancient saints in his meditations and made spiritual dialogues with them. After conversion he testified, "Confucianism has been so corrupted that it lost its original nature and people keep only its ceremonies. Alas! Its destiny is doomed. Christianity teaches the original nature of the Way rather than its external forms. Thus its future is beautiful." He had struggled with the problem of the disparity between the original Confucianism and the contemporary corrupted Confucianism. Christianity solved his spiritual struggle and fulfilled his longings for the realization of the original Confucian teachings.

In the past I have met Confucius in the dreams or at the Confucian temple and school. Now I meet him at the Christian chapel. How strange it is! No, it is not a strange thing at all, considering the fact that the so-called pious Confucianists are so corrupted and spending the times in drinking at the Confucian temples. How can the saints like duke Chou and Confucius stay such corrupted places. Even if Confucius were born again into the world, he would want to live in the holy place, in which

munhwasa, 1998), 205.) The Japanese police began to forge the conspiracy case after this conference and the welcoming ceremony of Ch'a Chae-myŏng at Sŏnch'ŏn by the students of Singŏng School. Soon Yang and others were imprisoned.

the good way like Christianity is taught, and he would not ever go to the corrupted Confucian temples although they keep his tablets. Therefore I ought to follow Jesus.⁶⁹

Kim Yong-ha experienced Confucius' relocation from the Confucian temple to the Christian chapel. Confucius stayed in the Christian chapel! He found the original Confucian messages in the Christian teachings. As Christianity presented a purer and more perfect form of the Confucian teachings, he left the degraded Chosŏn Confucianism, and joined the Christian Church. His conversion stimulated neighbors to turn to Christianity, and soon the village became a Christian town with a Christian school (普昌學敎) for modern education, which was established by Yi Tong-hwi and supported by Kim Yong-ha and Chŏn Pyŏng-gyu.

Yi Tong-hwi (李東輝, 1873-1935), a leader of the military independence movement in Manchuria against the Japanese, had participated in the Independence Club Movement in 1897-98 when he was a high officer of the imperial troops in Seoul. In 1903 he resigned the position and was transferred to Kangwha as commander of the first battalion of the garrison regiment of the island, which was one of the most strategic troops among the local army system and composed of about 1,000 soldiers.

He is well known and looked upon by heathen and Christian alike as a man of sterling character. Being in a position to know the awful corrupt practices of his government and becoming heart sick at the same and with a consuming desire to find the truth he went before His Majesty and asked to be relieved of his rank and office, which the latter did with great reluctance, and then returning to Kang Wha he sought our local preacher Kim Oo-chei and made confession of all his sins before him and the church and offered himself and service to the Lord, praying for a genuine change of heart and a clear and personal knowledge of the truth which is the way and the life.⁷⁰

Mr. Yi became a Methodist Christian through the help of Kim U-je, a local preacher, in 1904.⁷¹

“His sincerity has been vindicated beyond doubt by the fact that he immediately gave up his

⁶⁹ Kim Chong-u, “Moksa Kim Chong-u ssi,” in Mrs. W. A. Noble, comp., *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*, 126. Kim Chong-u (1884-1939), Kim Yong-ha's grandson, graduated from Paejae Haktang. Later he became a spirit-filled revivalist who performed many signs and wonders. He was elected as bishop in 1938. Cf. Yi Tŏk-chu, “Kim Chong-u,” *Han'guk kŭrisŭdoinŭlŭi kaejong iyagi*, 361-71.

⁷⁰ KOM for 1905, 64.

⁷¹ Kim U-je was appointed as an exhorter of the first year at the Wesley Church in Chemulp'o in May 1902, yet was appointed as a local preacher of the first year at the Kangwha Circuit in May 1903, for the first local preacher Kim Sang-nim (1847-1902) died in May 1902, and the successor Pak Nŭng-il died in March 1903. Kim Sang-nim, who had tried many governmental examinations, was one of the first Christians in Kangwha. He was baptized by G. H. Jones in October of 1894 and appointed as a local

smoking and drinking and went directly to his old associates first confessing his wrongs and asking their forgiveness, and then telling them of the peace of mind and heart he had found and exhorting them to follow suite.” E. M. Cable expressed his expectation of him: “Mr. Yi is a bright intelligent young man of very great promise and I cannot but believe that the Lord has especially chosen him to be a powerful influence in leading men of rank and influence to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”⁷²

Yi was converted not only for personal sanctification but also for national independence. In the fall of 1904 Yi Tong-hwi established a school for the children of soldiers and town people at his own expense. It taught geography and history of Korea and other countries, mathematics, and other elementary subjects day and night. Cho Hui-il, who had studied in Japan, volunteered to teach.⁷³ At this time in Kangwha two phenomena took place simultaneously in the face of the social, political and economic crisis. One was that a large number of Christians went to “the land of paradise, Hawaii;” and the other was a phenomenal growth of the church membership. The Hawaiian fever “uprooted” a whole church at Kyodong and “decimated” others in the island. The severe famine of 1902 devastated numerous houses. The incoming Japanese merchants, fishermen and farmers took over the business. The Korean people went to Hawaii, Mexico, or the United States in search of an El Dorado or of an education.⁷⁴ On the other hand, as E. M. Cable reported, “Some of the most prominent and influential men of the city and entire island have come into the church and been converted.” Yi was one of the latter cases. The characteristics of the Kangwha churches were rapid growth, spiritual health, self-support, and patriotism.

preacher in 1898. Kim U-je studied theology with Kim Sang-nim and Pak from 1900. (“Kim Sang-nim ssi pyölsehasim,” *SW* (June 1902), 170-2; *KOM for 1903*, 6, 21, & 23; “Chöndosa Pak Nüing-il ssi pyölseham,” *SW* (April 1903), 146-7.)

⁷² *KOM for 1905*, 64.

⁷³ “Chappo, Yölsim kyoyuk,” *Taehan Mail Sinbo* (Nov. 16, 1904), 465. The school was opened with about 30 children of the soldiers and about 20 children of the town people.

⁷⁴ *ARBFMMEC for 1904*, 311-3; *ARBFMMEC for 1905*, 308; *KOM for 1905*, 64.

Yi Tong-hwi was the key figure in the Christian patriotic and educational movement in Kangwha. When the Protectorate Treaty was enforced on November 17, 1905, he issued a “Word for Our Twenty-Million Compatriots!” in which he proclaimed,

I have believed in the Christian religion for years because I think that there will be neither the heart-mind to love each other [相愛之心] nor the heart-mind to love the nation [愛國之心] nor the heart-mind of independence [獨立之心] without the religion. I also believe that self-cultivation and self-strengthening, loyalty and patriotism, independence and cooperation, and learning and education originate from Christianity. Therefore, our compatriots, I want you to believe in Christianity with devotion.⁷⁵

As a military officer and a Christian, he combined patriotism with Christianity. His first strategy was recovering the people’s power for self-strengthening and independence through Christian education. In 1906 the school developed as the center of education for the island with ten instructors and 210 boys. Several courses were taught in English, Chinese, Korean and Japanese and physical and military training was provided. Principal Yi “had a very commendable scheme of education, and all is carried on without any expenses to the church.”⁷⁶ His patriotic enlightenment and education movement, however, was halted by his imprisonment in 1906.⁷⁷

In 1908 he was sent to his hometown, North Hamgyŏng province, by the Sŏbuk hakhoe (Society for Education in Northwestern Korea). He worked as a colporteur under Rev. R. Grierson of the Canadian Presbyterian Mission from the spring of 1909. Whenever he went he preached that if all Koreans believed in Jesus, Korea would be a nation of enlightenment, civilization and independence. The Japanese police checked all his preaching and meetings.⁷⁸ He identified Christianity with the way to modernization and independence.

Rhee Syng-man and Other Political Leaders Converted in the Seoul Prison

⁷⁵ Yi Tong-hwi, “Yugo yich’ŏnman tongp’o hyŏngje sŏ,” in *Sŏngjae Yi Tong-hwi chŏnsŏ* (Ch’ ŏnan: The Institute for the Korean Independence Movement Studies, 1998), 7.

⁷⁶ E. M. Cable, “The Longing for Education,” *KMF* (June 1906), 145.

⁷⁷ “Chappo,” *KTMS* (Aug. 15, 1906).

⁷⁸ Kim Sŭng-t’ae, “Hanmal Kaenada changnohoe sŏngyosa tŭlŭi Han’guk sŏngyoe kwanhan yŏngu, 1898-1910,” Th. M., Hansin University, 1999, 64-7. Mr. Yi later devoted himself to the independence of Korea in North Manchuria and Vladivostok and then in Shanghai as prime minister of the Provisional Government.

Yi Tong-hwi's motto—Christianity for modernization and independence of Korea—was shared by other progressive leaders in Seoul. The reform-minded members of the Epworth League in Seoul such as Rhee Syng-man, Pak Yong-man, Chŏn Dŏk-ki and Kong Hong-yŏl wrote essays in *Sinhak wŏlbo* in 1903-04, when W. C. Swearer and R. Moose were editors. Korean young men argued that the old Confucianism should be replaced by a new and perfect religion of Christianity, for the sake of the modernization and independence of Korea.

Rhee Syng-man (Yi Sŭng-man 李承晩, 1875-1965), the first president of Korea from 1948 to 1960, began his political career in 1898 when he was a student of Pajai School. He was arrested and confined in the Seoul Prison in January of 1899. He sent an article to *Sinhak wŏlbo* in 1903, in which he asserted that the future fate of Korea depended upon Christianity.⁷⁹ As the times had changed, he claimed, Confucianism, although it had reformed the society in the past, lost relevance in modern times. Asian nations became poorer and weaker with the human way of Confucianism. In contrast Western nations became wealthy and strong with the Heavenly Way of Christianity, which brought peaceful revolutions and reformations. Rhee argued, "How does a clean government work upon the corrupt people? A new people make a clear government. Therefore the church is the foundation of the government." Rhee believed in the people's power and envisioned reformation of Korea from the bottom to the top. For him Christianity's moral and spiritual reformation of the people was the foundation of the political reformation of the government. Thus he contended that the self-supporting, self-propagating, self-governing and united Korean Church was the foundation of independent Korea. According to Rhee,

⁷⁹ Yi Sŭng-man was born in P'yŏngsan, Hwanghae, in 1875, and moved to Seoul when he was 5 years old. He studied Confucian classic before entering Paejae Haktang. His father studied books on geomancy and prophecy and his mother was a devoted Buddhist. After graduating from Paejae School, he worked as a journalist and devoted himself to the reform movement of the Independent Club. Yet he was imprisoned in January of 1899 and freed from the Seoul Prison in August of 1904. Protestant missionaries tried to free him from the jail. H. G. Appenzeller helped him and his family. D. A. Bunker preached to the prisoners. (H. G. Appenzeller's Diary, Dec. 28, 1899, in Yi Mahn-yol, *Appenzeller*, 415-7; F. A. McKenzie, *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, 232; "News Calendar," *KRW* (Aug. 1904), 364; Yi Kwang-rin, "Kuhanmal okchung esŏui kidokkyo sinang," *Tongbang hakchi* (June 1985), 478ff; Sŏ Chŏng-min, "Kuhanmal Yi Sŭng-man ŭi hwaldong kwa kidokkyo," MA, Yonsei University, 1987.) Yi.

Confucianism had lost its vitality and relevance for the modern Korea. A new religion Christianity was required for the enlightenment, modernization and independence of Korea.⁸⁰

Likewise, in 1903, Mr. Kong Hong-ryŏl, secretary of Sangdong Epworth League, compared the imperfect human way of Confucianism with the “perfect” Heavenly Way of Christianity. He insisted that Confucianism had lost truth and produced many evils and corrupt practices.

Today Christianity, the Heavenly Way, is prevalent in the continents of West and East. It proves God’s almighty power. If Confucius had been completely perfect and holy, and led the world perfectly, why was there not a Martin Luther any longer after fifteen hundred years later? The human way, Confucianism, is not like the Heavenly Way. When a perfect and holy one comes, an imperfect one should go. Now there is a good opportunity for Christianity to progress in Korea.⁸¹

Mr. Kong was convinced that Christianity was a “perfect and holy” divine teaching for the salvation of the sinners and the modernization of perishing Korea. Young men of the Sangdong Methodist Church of Seoul aimed to establish an independent and modern Korea through Christian civilization.⁸²

In 1903-04, some progressive and nationalistic leaders—Rhee Syng-man, Yi Sang-jae, Namgung Ŏk, Yu Sŏng-jun, Yi Won-gŭng, Kim Chŏng-sik, Yi Sŭng-in, Kim Rin, Hong Chae-gi, Cho Chong-man, An Kuk-sŏn, Pak Sŭng-bok, and probably Yang Ki-t’ak—while in prison were converted to Christianity.⁸³ As seen Part III Chapter 5, in 1905, Yi Sang-jai, a leader of the YMCA, delivered a lecture on “God in Confucianism” to the audience composed of the higher class of Korean young men.

He was dealing with a subject which has been the nearest and dearest to the hearts of the literary and nobility of the nation for centuries. His effort was to show that Confucius also believed in a

⁸⁰ Rhee Syng-man, “Yesugyo ga Taehan jangnae ŭi kuich’o,” *SW* (Aug. 1903), 330-5; “Tugaji p’yŏnbyŏktoem,” *SW* (Sept. 1903), 389-95; “Kyohoe kyŏngryak,” *SW* (Nov. 1903), 473-9; E Sung Man, “Appeals of Native Christians,” *KMF* (June 1908), 96. For the topic of modernization through Christianity in Korea, see Chung Chai-sik, “Protestantism and Formation of Modern Korea, 1884-1894.” Ph.D., Boston Univ., 1964.

⁸¹ Kong Hong-ryŏl, “Mitŭmkwa yŏlsim,” *SW* (Sept. 1903), 399.

⁸² Kong Hong-ryŏl, “Yesu ŭi kusok hasim ŭl saram i bonbat ŭl gŏt,” *SW* (Feb. 1904), 81.

⁸³ Most were put into prison in March 1901. “They were extremely distressed after three years in prison. Fortunately, however, it was possible to send in religious books to the prisoners and Western missionaries were also permitted to preach their religion the prisoners. All the prisoners studied the New Testament, were resolved to convert to Christianity, were baptized, and followed the commandments. They were forerunners among Korean gentlemen who converted to Christianity. In 1904 they were released. They assembled at Yŏndong Church in Seoul.” (Yi Nŭng-hwa, *Chosŏn kidokkyo kŭp oegyo sa* [History of Christianity and Diplomacy in Korea] (Seoul: Ch’angmunsa Co., 1928), 203-4.)

God of the universe and that every Korean Confucianist ought, at the same time he retains his admiration for the beautiful truths uttered by the great Chinese teacher, to offer his heart in worship to the great Father of all.⁸⁴

Educated Confucian-Christians and progressive Christian leaders contended that there was continuity between Confucian *Shangti* and Christian God and the Eastern Heaven was identical with the Western Heaven.⁸⁵ Although they acknowledged the contributions of Confucianism to morality and politics in East Asia for three thousand years, they believed that the Heavenly Way Christianity was more relevant to modern Korea than the human way Confucianism, because the human mind-heart was changing with the times.⁸⁶ They did not see Christianity and Confucianism as mutually exclusive.

Yang Ki-t'ak (梁起鐸, 1871-1938) wrote most editorials of *Taehan maeil sinbo* [Korea Daily News], whose first issue was published in July 1904. The newspaper asserted that a nation had two kinds of power—the visible and the invisible, and religion belonged to the latter. Its standard to judge a religion was whether it was beneficial to a nation or not. The paper was critical to Confucianism, because it did not have concern for the national independence but for its own survival. The paper also criticized Korean Buddhism and Tonghak (Ch'öndogyo) for their Japanization. Nevertheless, the paper claimed that there was hope in only Christianity, because it had more power and thus was more perfect than Confucianism in the changing modern era.⁸⁷

An Kuk-sön (安國善, 1879- 1926) was also converted in the prison, yet he was banished to the Island of Chindo when he was released from the prison in March 1904. When he returned to Seoul, he was appointed to a governmental officer in 1907. He joined the work of the YMCA and attended Yöndong Church. The main thesis of his lectures and articles up until 1910 was the improvement of social customs and morality and the cultivation of the national power for

⁸⁴ P. L. Gillett, "Y. M. C. A. Work in Seoul," *KM* (June 10, 1905), 101-2.

⁸⁵ See Ch'oi Pyöng-hön, "Kisö," *Hwangsöng sinmun* (Dec. 22, 1903).

⁸⁶ See Rhee Syng-man's book, written in the prison in 1904, *Tongnip chöngsim* [Independent Spirit] (Seoul: Chöngdong ch'ulp'ansa, 1993), 280-2.

⁸⁷ "Injyon ül pojonha kyeche'aek," *Taehan maeil sinbo* (July 31 & Aug. 1, 1907); See Pak Myöng-su, "Hanmal minjok chuüi chadülüi chonggyo ihæ," *Han'guk kidokkyowa yöksa* (Sep. 1995), 2-30.

independence through education and the economic development. He considered Confucianism not as a religion, a heavenly way, but as a philosophy or a human way.⁸⁸ Yet his main concern was the recovery of people's morality through the transforming power of Christianity. His novel, *Kūmsu hoeŭirok* (A Minutes of the Animal Meeting) published in 1909, stressed the inner transformation of the heart as the basis for social reform.⁸⁹ He accepted the Confucian ethical values—filial piety, sincerity, propriety, integrity, justice, faithfulness, and fidelity—yet added new Christian concepts of God, human nature and human equality. When Yi Won-gŭng (李源兢, 1849-?) organized the Society for Education of the People (Kungmin kyoyukhoe) in 1905, he claimed that Christianity was the foundation of education and civilization.

Yu Kil-jun (兪吉濬, 1856-1914), one of the last converts from Confucianism to Christianity among the first progressive enlightenment leaders, also thought that Christian faith would complement Confucianism and bring it to perfection. In his “Preface to the Bible Training Class,” probably written around 1912, Yu said:

Those who revere Confucius regard Christianity with contempt while those who revere Christ denounce Confucianism, each refusing to know the other and each rejecting the other as heretical, like blind men discussing what the sun looks like. Thus they defile the eternally sacred religions of the East and the West. Though they are brothers, they are as incompatible with each other as water with fire. How narrow-minded they are and how shallow their thought is! ... Our compatriots should read the teachings of Confucius to learn the art of worldly life and have faith in Christ the Savior in their religious life.⁹⁰

Confucianism and Christianity were complementary: the former was for daily life, and Christianity was for religious life.

Shin Sŏk-ku

Rev. Shin Sŏk-ku (申錫九, 1875-1950), who was one of the 33 representatives of the March First Independence movement of 1919, was converted in July 1907. In his childhood, he was

⁸⁸ “An Kuk-sŏn ssi Taehan kūmil sŏnhuch’aek,” in Kim Tae-hŭi, *Yisip segi Chosŏn ron* (Seoul: 1907), 4-5.

⁸⁹ Ch’oi Ki-yŏng, “Hanmal An Kuk-sŏn ŭi kidokkyo suyong,” *Han’guk kidokkyowa yŏksa* (Sept. 1995), 44-5.

⁹⁰ Yu Kil-jun, “Sagyŏnghowsŏ,” in *Yu Kil-jun chŏjak chŏnjip*, vol II [Complete Collection of Yu Kil-jun’s Writings] (Seoul: Iljogak, 1971), 398-9; See Yi Kwang-rin, “Progressive Views on Protestantism (II),” *Korea Journal* (March 1976), 36.

trained under his father, a country Confucian scholar. After a period ten years of immoral life and financial sufferings, he began a new life in Seoul and then in Changdan, Kyōnggi, with one of his friends, Kim Jin-u. Shin was seeking something to do as a citizen of the perishing nation. He concluded that all the people should have the right Way for the renewal of the nation. But he was not sure which religion was the right Way. One day he bought a copy of the Bible. He began to read the book in order to find the defects of Christianity. His feelings exploded at the sayings of Jesus in Matthew 5:17. He had opposed Christianity because he thought that Christianity came to Korea to destroy the perfect way of Confucianism. To his surprise, however, the verse was saying that Jesus came to Korea to complete the defects of Confucianism. He answered his own questions in soliloquy.

Q: What is the purpose of Confucianism?

A: It is self-cultivation, regulation of the family, national order, and world peace.

Q: Has it cultivated people and regulated families?

A: Occasionally.

Q: Has it ordered nations and made a peaceful world?

A: Neither.⁹¹

He remembered that Confucian saints like Confucius and Mencius and later sages themselves had failed to make a peaceful world. Especially the history of the Confucian Chosōn dynasty was filled with family feuds and bloody factional rivalries, and scholars respected letters and forsook spirit. It did not order the nation, much less make a peaceful world. He continued to ask himself. “In contrast, see the Jesus Doctrine. All the advanced nations believe in Christianity. Let’s see peoples, let alone nations. Is there any Confucian scholar who practices what he has learned from his childhood? But see the ignorant, the lowly, drunkards, vagrants, or hopeless people in the Christian Church. Why did they become new persons in a few years?”

Q. It is not due to the defects of Confucianism, but to the non-practicing of its teachings.

A. Let’s talk with a parable. There are two wheels of a cart. When a person pulls the cart, one wheel turns round well, yet the other does not turn properly. It is not his fault, but the wheel itself is out of order. Christianity transforms a forsaken person into a new person, while Confucianism does not make a new person although he learns it from his childhood. It is not due to the learner’s fault, but to the defects of Confucianism itself.⁹²

⁹¹ Shin Sōk-ku, *Chasōjōn* (Seoul: Han’guk kamnigyo sahakhoe, 1990), 57.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 58.

He concluded that Confucianism had defects in both transforming persons and ordering a nation. Christianity seemed to be a more perfect alternative. The verse of Matthew 5:17 let Shin realize the defects of Confucianism, and to become interested in Christianity, which he hoped could show him the way to personal perfection and national salvation. He retained his Confucian morality and social ethics. Fulfillment theory, however, led him to knock on the door of the church.⁹³ Many others like Shin Sŏk-ku found the way to national salvation in a more perfect religion—Christianity. In the case of Shin, his nationalism combined fulfillment theory with the idea that Christianity was a vehicle of modern “civilization.”

4. From Buddhism to Christianity

Cho Chi-bong

In 1898 Cho Chi-bong (趙芝鳳), an old Buddhist man, and his grandson Cho Yongnyŏm (趙容廉) of Namsan, south of Ŭiju, were converted by Yang Chŏn-baek. They donated their own Buddhist temple to the church. It was the first case that a Buddhist temple was converted to a Christian chapel in Korea. Yang reported, “There is an old man Chi Chi-bong, who likes to help poor people. After conversion to Christianity, he feeds the hungry and gives clothes to the naked. Besides these, he established a school for children, lends money with lowest interest to the needy, and does not look after his own business. Only the bright light of Jesus enables him to do these good things.”⁹⁴ Mr. Cho exhorted neighbors to believe in Christianity, the way of the eternal life. After Mr. Cho and his grandson “believed in” Jesus, they continued to do “good works” for the “eternal life.” Thus, their Buddhist combination of belief and good work for eternal life was preserved in their Christian faith.

Sŏ Yŏng-su

⁹³ Shin moved to Songdo and became a language teacher of W. T. Reid of the Southern Methodist Mission. He was baptized in March 1908 at the age of 34, and became a local evangelist in 1909.

⁹⁴ Yang Chŏn-baek, “Kyohoe t’ongsin,” *KS* (Nov. 24, 1898), 457; Ch’a Chae-myŏng, ed., op. cit., 49.

When Korean Buddhists were converted to Christianity, they were moved by the Christian themes of the forgiveness of sin through the merit of Christ and liberation from the sinful world.⁹⁵

In 1900 Mr. Sō Yōng-su of Seoul, who had practiced Buddhist worship and prayer for thirty years, joined the Methodist Church.

There is an old man, Mr. Sō, whose nature is different from the ordinary people. He has not made efforts for the life of this mundane world, but worshipped Buddhism for his soul in the world to come. He has devoted himself to read the Buddhist scriptures without paying attention to the worldly affairs, and wished to go to heaven for thirty years. One day he heard the Christian gospel from a Christian, yet he refuted it as an abomination. The evangelist persisted in preaching the gospel. The old man was not impressed with his exhortation. Nevertheless, when he heard that if he believed in Jesus the Son of God with sincere heart, all of his sins would be forgiven, be blessed with the eternal happiness in heaven, and become a son of the holy and glorious God, he confessed his sins with the help of the Holy Spirit. He was so sorry, happy and joyful that he burned all his devil books and things. Now his faith is firm. He walks four miles to attend the services and meetings without feeling fatigue. Praise be to the Lord! Let's pray that such a lot of devoted believers may arise.⁹⁶

The Christian gospel answered his life-long search for the pure and sinless heart. Mr. Yang Chin-guk's message—Christ's redemptive work saves him from sin—solved his spiritual quest for salvation from the sinful world. In 1904 he became seventy years old. Nevertheless, his faith grew firmer. He observed every Sabbath. He selected some passages from the Bible and made them the standards of his faith. They were Romans 5:6, 8:21, 3:25, II Cor. 5:21, Gal. 1:4, I Cor. 15:17, I Peter 1:21, Hebrew 9:28, Romans 6:6, and Gal. 2:20. They testified to the individual and cosmic salvation from the old self and the sinful world through Christ's redemption.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. 5:6) "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Rom. 8:21) "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom. 6:6) "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)

Sō's Buddhist worldview was fused into the Christian worldview through his reading of the Bible. Or his old Buddhist paradigm of *nirvana* was shifted to the new Christian paradigm of liberation. He crucified his old self and found a new self in Christ. His Buddhist doctrine of sin and salvation

⁹⁵ Buddhists thought that "sin of itself has not a matter but follows the rising of the passions. When passions are destroyed sin itself will cease." ("Buddhist Chants and Processions," *KR* (April 1895), 125.)

⁹⁶ "Ch'ōsa hoegai," *SW* (Aug. 1901), 357-8.

was fulfilled in the Christian understanding of grace, redemption, justification, resurrection, and glorification. His longings was satisfied for the “eternal blessing in heaven” (天堂福).⁹⁷

Yi Ki-nam

The following case is a conversion of a Buddhist monk. Helper Pak Sŭng-myŏng of Yŏndong Presbyterian Church of Seoul reported that a Buddhist Yi Ki-nam was converted in September 1905.

Yi Ki-nam of Pong-ŭn Temple in Kwangju was originally a man of pure nature and unusual heart. He did not look after this world, but looked for the world to come and its blessings. Twenty years ago he entered the mountain monastery and lived as a monk studying Buddhist scriptures and venerated the Buddha sincerely. His two sons became also monks, and three men have believed the Buddhist law with one heart. Fortunately God looked after this lost person. When he heard the words of God last September, he immediately repented his sin and believed in Jesus. He has attended the chapel 6 miles away from his house every Sunday. He discarded his twenty-year old faith and believes in the Lord earnestly. This brother's life of faith is the most joyful one among two hundred believers that I know.⁹⁸

Yi Ki-nam preached the gospel, read the Bible, or prayed all day. He was a quick learner of the Bible. Yet his sons were slow to hear his exhortation. He remained at the temple for the sons. One day when the sons were away from the temple, other monks destroyed the door of his room and beat him at night. However he endured all the abuses “thinking of the cross of the Lord.”

When Korean Buddhists were converted to Christianity, their main concern was religious salvation from the sinful world to the eternal heavenly blessing. Their quest for *nirvana* was fulfilled by Christian eschatological salvation, and their human efforts for a pure heart was fulfilled by the redemption of Jesus Christ and the transformation of the Holy Spirit. They continued to do good works for the poor and the needy.

5. From Multi-religions to Christianity

Although other people who were converted from Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Tonghak, and folk religions, had a multi-religious identity, the following persons will illustrate typical cases of the conversion from plural-religious identity to Christianity.

⁹⁷ Ku Hŭng-guk, “Kyŏngsyŏng tongmunan kyo’u ŭi yŏlsim,” *SW* (Oct. 1904), 438-9.

⁹⁸ Pak Sŭng-myŏng, “Kyohoe t’ongsin,” *KS* (June 14, 1906), 568.

Kim Chu-ryŏn

In February 1903, evangelist Yi Ŭn-sŭng led a Bible class at the Hamjong Methodist Church of the Yŏngbyŏn circuit, P'yŏng'an, for a week. There was a scholar named Kim Chu-ryŏn, who had studied the classics of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, and been a Roman Catholic believer for 30 years. He had practiced all these religions together. He attended the Bible class and decided to join Protestantism. He had let his family attend the church earlier. "He said that he could not come to Yesugyo quickly for two reasons: First, it was hard to forsake in a morning the religion that he has believed for 30 years. Secondly, it was hard to stop drinking. When he discussed the Christian doctrines and the question of drinking, he immediately stopped drinking and returned to the Yesugyo."⁹⁹ His first obstacle was the Methodist Church's strict prohibition of drinking unlike the Roman Catholic Church's tolerance. He came to realize the sinfulness of drinking before God and his conscience through Yi's teaching. Mr. Kim wrote a vow of total temperance and gave it to Mr. Yi three days later.¹⁰⁰ The most important motive of Mr. Kim's conversion, however, was Yi's teaching on the fulfillment of three Korean religions by Christianity. Mr. Kim regarded fulfillment theory as "a spiritual elixir," which solved his life long spiritual journey.

The ways of Confucius, Buddha and Laozi are like lamps at dark night, while the truth of Jesus is like the sun in the heaven. And Confucius and Mencius taught people with the way of *samgang oryun* and *susin chega*, and Laozi and Buddha taught the world with the sayings of heaven and hell. All of them were the messengers whom Jesus had sent to the world in advance and let them prepare his way.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ "Hamjong'ŭp kyohoe hyŏngp'yŏŏn yakron," *SW* (April 1903), 152-3. The Hamjong'ŭp Church was begun in 1900. They built a girls' school in May 1902. Mrs. Chŏn Sam-dŏk (1843-1932), a yangban Christian woman from Kangsŏ, was the teacher. (Her husband was appointed a Royal Councilor in the Government in 1885, and after a few years later a magistrate of Poryŏng for 5 years. Then they moved to Kangsŏ. She was baptized by W. B. Scranton in 1893 and attended P'yŏngyang N'amsanhyŏn Methodist Church every Sunday. She built Kangsŏŭp kyohoe in 1897, and preached near towns including Hamjong. She attended the first women's Bible class held in P'yŏngyang in 1897. She became a Bible woman under Miss Ethel M. Estey, who sent Mrs. Chun to Hamjong in 1902. In 1926 Kangsŏŭp Kyohoe celebrated her 30 years ministry and built a monument for her. See Chun Sam-dŏk, "Nae saengwhal ŭi yalryŏk," In Mrs. W. A. Noble, compiled, *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea* (Seoul: Ch'angmunsa, 1927), 6-13.) Hamjong'ŭp Church built a chapel in August 1902. Its class leader was Yi Kyo-dam who took care of about 100 believers. They cured a demon-possessed man with twenty days intercessory prayers

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 156-9.

¹⁰¹ Kim Chu-ryŏn, "Sang Yi moksa sŏ," *SW* (Jan. 1904), 6-7.

Kim Chu-ryŏn reinterpreted East Asian classics with the viewpoint of fulfillment. First, he asserted that *Shangti* of Three Classics (*Books of History*, *Odes*, and the *Book of Changes*) was the Creator God. Second, he compared imperfect Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism with perfect Christianity.

One could not know His mysterious power of creation and understand His extensive providence except the great sages who were endowed with wisdom and understanding by God. Therefore God sent the wisdom of Buddha and Laozi and let them teach the truth of heaven and hell or the sayings of discipline and physical practices for long life. He also sent sages Confucius and Mencius and let them teach the truths of Three Principles and Five Relationships and Four Steps (cultivation of personal life, regulation of the family, national order, and world peace). Thus the way of *san-ts'ai* (three realms: heaven, earth and people) was established. Laozi and Buddha focused on the truth of immortality in heaven, so that their teachings departed from human ethics and finally fell into nothingness and annihilation. Thus they have no effectiveness in the real life. Confucianism taught only morality of everyday life, not the truth of heaven and hell. Although its learning has practicality, it lacks the vast and perfect truth.¹⁰²

He emphasized that three religions—Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism—were the ways of humanity and came from human beings, as all the Chinese characters of the three religions—儒佛仙—proved. In contrast the character of “Ch’ŏn” [天] of the Heavenly Way [天道] consisted of “One” [一] and “Greatness” [大]. In other words, Jesus came from the One-Great, God. “Laozi, Buddha, Confucius and Mencius are the prophets of the world, but not the Creator of the all things.” Mr. Kim concluded that “the Jesus Doctrine taught heaven at the top, human ethics in the middle, and hell at the bottom; like a tree it is fully equipped with root, stems, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits; or it is like a person who has ears, eyes, nose, mouth, arms, legs and all other whole parts to use properly. The Jesus Way is not like other ways that have branches and leaves without fruits.” To him, Christianity was a complete heavenly way to a moral society and eternal blessings, while other religions were imperfect human ways.

Pak A-ji

In 1908 Pak A-ji (朴兒至), a 105 years-old man, attended the Methodist church at Kongju, Ch’ungch’ŏng province. He was on the floor with his feet under him, sitting erect, but with eyes downcast looking toward his hands, which were folded in his lap. Like an image of

¹⁰² Ibid., 8.

Buddha, his whole attitude revealed the fact that he was seeking peace by meditation, as Buddha was supposed to have attained *nirvana*. After the service was over he lingered a while and then in wavering voice he began to recite an old Korean poem. One Sunday he visited Rev. James D. Van Buskirk and said to the Korean helper: "One hundred and five years have I lived; I have sought to find God in Confucianism, in Buddhism and in Taoism, and could not. But I am convinced that there is a great God and I want to find him before I die. I want to believe on Jesus!" That night he enrolled as a believer. He traded his old books for a New Testament. In less than two months he had read it all through. Then he received the Old Testament. He introduced himself to the missionary. He was born in Seoul 105 years before, and spent his boyhood days there. He spent his time in study. He was never married. Soon after the death of his parents fifty years before, he came south to Kumkang and lived there for ten years; then he went to the "Sam sin tang sak sil" temple. There he taught the Chinese classics to the boys for thirty years. Three years earlier he had come to Kongju. He continued,

What religions have I done? I first followed Confucianism in order that I might do proper reverence to my parents, but that did not bring peace to my heart. Then I read of Gautama Buddha, and feeling a great longing to escape from the ills of life and gain peace, I went to the temple on Kai Ryong San and hoped by devoting my life to meditation to finally lose the world and attain Nirvana as did Buddha. But peace did not come. Then I heard that Taoism had promise of everlasting life, and thought that by doing all three of the religions I might gain peace and life. I studied and practiced these religions for years, but they failed to give me what I sought—I did not find God.¹⁰³

Then at last he heard of Jesus and believed Him. He confessed that he had at last found peace. He gave his testimony to Rev. Van Buskirk in an improvised poem. He had cherished in his mind that it be spontaneously uttered.

God of wisdom, before thee there was none,
After thee there was none! All wisdom
Thou hast been, art now, and ever shall be!
I am but a wretched man, O God,
Thou art God of everlasting life!
Thou, my Father, my Mother.

Then he continued: "In Jesus my mind is at peace! When I think of the joy that awaits me with him, my poor tongue could not utter it and no pen could write my hopes and joy."

¹⁰³ J. D. Van Buskirk, "Pak Ah Chi, Aged Korean Christian," *WWM* (March 1909), 37.

Pak's life illustrated a typical Korean seeker who did and practiced all three religions—Confucianism for morality, Buddhism for *nirvana*, and Taoism for everlasting life. In his religious life three religions did not conflict each other but were in the relationship of complement and harmony. But they did not answer his main quest—finding the God of peace and life. Finally when he found Him through the reading of the Bible, he confessed his belief in Jesus and testified to his faith in the God of Wisdom and Life. He met a personal God and he called Him “my Father and my Mother.” His ultimate search for God was fulfilled by Christianity. The following cases also reveal Korean Christians' multi-religious identity before their conversions.

6. From Tonghak to Christianity

Pang Ki-ch'ang (邦基昌, 1851-1911) was baptized by S. A. Moffett in November of 1894, and ordained as a minister in 1907. Just before his ordination Moffett wrote about him.

Elder Bang, now 55 years of age, is the oldest man in the “seminary.” He is preeminently the traveling evangelist, and has had to do with organizing more country groups than any other man. In 1894 he was a leader of a band of Tong Haks—revolutionists who tried to overthrow the government and expel foreigners. Fleeing for his life, he came to a little village where Mr. Lee and I were preaching and followed us to Pyeng Yang.¹⁰⁴

Pang was born in a yangban family in Sinch'ŏn, Whanghae, and was educated in the Confucian classics for nine years. He taught at a private school for three years, and then became a lower officer of the local government at the age of 28. He joined the *Tong-hak* (東學 Eastern Learning) as one of its first believers in North Korea in 1883. He became a prominent leader (*chŏpchu*, captain). At that time people believed that leaders of the Tonghak had magical supernatural powers. The Taoist traditions taught that the Taoist sages and immortals could control cosmic energy and master various arts, so that they could walk as fast as other people rode on horseback; or enter a room through a closed door; or sit in the middle of a blazing fire without burning the garments at all, or change appearance from an old man to a small child. Thus the *Tonghaks*

¹⁰⁴ S. A. Moffett, “An Educated Ministry in Korea,” 139; “P'yŏngnam nohoe Che il hoe hoerok, 1912” in Kŭl Jin-kyŏng, ed. *Yŏnggye Kil Sŏn-ju moksa yugo sŏnjim*, vol. I (Seoul: Taehan kidokkyosŏhoe, 1968), 260; J. S. Gale, *Vanguard*, 32-7.

believed that they would be protected by magical powers during the Tonghak Uprising in 1894.¹⁰⁵

J. S. Gale described them in his semi-fiction, *Vanguard*.

In a lonely village among the hills of Whang-hǎ a group of dark-visaged Orientals have met to celebrate the rites of Tong-hak. They had had a brush with the soldiers of the capital, and half their number had been killed or scattered. They had thought they were bulletproof, and had danced and prayed themselves into ecstatic madness, but once in line with whistling Mausers, they found that all their tablets and spells counted for nothing.... A lot of them had been taken prisoners, and were locked up in the magistrate's Yamen five miles distant. "I tell you," says Captain Pang, "there is no help for us but to get aid from China. I'll start tomorrow with this lad and make the journey, with the assistance of the gods, and we'll win yet," and they all said, "Let us pray." They jumped about the room too, calling on the god to come down, "Come down!"¹⁰⁶

The Tonghaks believed that they were invulnerable, for talismans would protect them even from bullets. But their talismans were ineffective against the gunpowder of the government army. Most were killed. The prisoners were tortured and beheaded. Pang persuaded his friends that he could get troops from China. His real plan was to escape to the mountain alone and hide. As a fugitive with no money, he needed to master the skill of *pyökkok*, living without eating cooked grains and meat but only herbs. He remembered that his cousin in P'yŏngyang was learning some strange teaching. Hunger drove him hurriedly to reach at his cousin's house. A Christian meeting was held at his house led by G. Lee and S. A. Moffett. Pang entered the room and asked Moffett if he knew *pyökkok*. Instead Moffett gave him a Chinese book, *The Gate of Wisdom and Virtue*. Pang read it that night. "Death, and fear, and peace, and joy, were all patched together in one book, and not a word about how a man was to get his rice." But Moffett "looked sincere and true, and his words did not sound like Korean lies, so that Pang was mystified." He decided to follow the missionaries to P'yŏngyang and to learn the reason of his failure and the meaning of his life.¹⁰⁷

Mr. Pang, a Tonghak captain, became interested in Christianity through the book of *The Gate of Wisdom and Virtue*, written by G. John. As reviewed in Part II, the book emphasized that there was no difference between East and West in the heavenly Way. It also stressed the perfection of Christianity compared with Chinese religions.

¹⁰⁵ "P'yŏngnam nohoe Che il hoe hoerok, 1912;" J. S. Gale, *Vanguard*, 32-7.

¹⁰⁶ J. S. Gale, *Vanguard*, 32-3.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 37; Yi Tŏk-chu, "Pang Ki-ch'ang," *Han'guk kŭrisŭdoinŭlŭi kaejong iyagi*, 243-9.

Christianity does not destroy all the good teachings of the saints of each country, because they came from God. The light of the saints, however, is like the stars or the moon, so it is not enough for the people to use. However, the light of Jesus is like the sun, so it is sufficient to reveal all principles and laws.¹⁰⁸

John compared the relationship of Christianity and Confucianism to that of the sun and the moon. Pang realized that although Asian religions, including Tonghak, were good, they did not contain sufficient teachings for the people to know the way of God and the way to national salvation. He accepted Christianity because it came to Korea not to destroy Tonghak, but to fulfill it.

S. A. Moffett, in his report about the relationship between Christians and the Tonghaks, preached to the Tonghaks that Christianity could fulfill the cause of their uprising.

It was an interesting fact that these Christians had not been interfered with by the Tong Haks who had arisen in rebellion and who were producing great confusion in that province. They recognized the fact that Christians are the true friends of oppressed Korea. We were in this village in the very midst of the Tong Hak excitement, and were visited in a most friendly way by three of the leaders, one of whom I had known before. We had our services in the largest building in the place, which had been used by the Tong Haks as their headquarters, but which was offered for our use. We pointed them most plainly to the only real remedy for the oppression and injustice against which they have arisen, and we were given close attention.¹⁰⁹

Moffett paid “close attention” to these “misguided” leaders and “hopeless people.” His mind did not agree to their method of revolution, but his heart sympathized with their cause to get rid of “their unjust, wholly unprincipled and cruel officials.” Therefore, many of the former Tonghak captains, including Pang, and followers became Christians and offered their headquarters as a Christian chapel, for they believed that Christianity would fulfill their longings for personal salvation and social justice.¹¹⁰

Kim Ku

Kim Ku (金九, 1876-1949), president of the Provisional Government of Korea at Shanghai from 1928 to 1945, was converted to Christianity in 1903.¹¹¹ He was born in Haeju,

¹⁰⁸ Griffith John, 德惠入門, Ch. 18.

¹⁰⁹ **S. A. Moffett**, “The Work of the Spirit in North Korea,” *MRIW* (Nov. 1895), 834.

¹¹⁰ He was appointed to Yonggang Church. He “purified the church, led the congregation to the truth, and strengthened their virtue.” (Yi Yong-rin, “Ryonggang Chyechai kyohoe,” *Yesugyo sinbo* (Nov. 15, 1907), 194.

¹¹¹ He participated in *Sinminhoe* (New People Society) as a founding member in 1907. He was arrested in 1911 and imprisoned until 1914. He sought refuge in China in 1919 and joined the Provisional

Hwanghae province, and studied Confucian classics in his boyhood. When he failed at the national examination in 1892, he began to read Taoist books and military classics. In 1893 he joined the Tonghak and became the youngest captain in northern Korea. In September of 1894, his troops were defeated in the attack of Haeju and scattered by the raid of another Tonghak party. Kim fled and hid himself for several months, and then traveled to Manchuria. In March, 1896, he killed a Japanese officer at Anak as a revenge of the assassinated Queen. He was arrested and confined in the Chemulp'o Prison, where he read books on the history and geography of the world. King Kojong's phone call saved Kim's life just before his execution in September of 1897. Kim broke out of the jail in March 1898 and wandered all corners of the country and once he became a Buddhist monk. The imprisonment and a long "pilgrimage" of the country led Kim to believe that the awakening of the people, not by old Confucianism but by new learning, was the way to the national independence. His father died in 1900 and his fiancé in 1903. U Chong-sŏ, who had been a military adviser of Kim's Tonghak troops and became a Presbyterian helper, visited Kim and exhorted him to believe in Christianity. Kim read the Scriptures and tracts and decided to join the Christian Church. He attended a Bible class held by W. M. Baird and W. B. Hunt's in Haeju in November of 1903, and baptized by W. B. Hunt.¹¹²

Kim Ku attended the Bible class held in the P'yŏngyang Presbyterian Church on December 31, 1903.¹¹³ Kim began to study the Christian scriptures and doctrines intensely for two weeks. He returned to Haeju and moved to Changyŏn in February of 1904 and stayed at the house of O Jin-hyŏng, a local gentleman, who supported Kim to open a school [Pongyang School,

Government in Shanghai as the Chief of the Police Department. He was elected as president of the Provisional Government in 1928 and led the military resistance movement against the Japanese until returning to Korea in November of 1945. He was assassinated in June of 1949.

¹¹² W. B. Hunt traveled Hwanghae province in November 1903 and baptized 110 persons and received 101 catechumens. (N. C. Whiting to A. J. Brown, Jan. 29, 1904.)

¹¹³ About 600 Korean Christians attended the Class. The daily program consisted mainly of the Bible studies for 2 hours in the morning and 1 hour in the afternoon, and evening evangelistic meeting. A discussion was held on Saturday morning. Almost all missionaries in the North—Moffett, Baird, Lee, Swallen, Hunt, Bernheisel, Blair, Whittemore, and Ross—participated in the teaching. They were impressed with Korean Christians' testimonies and prayer. Miss Snook and Mrs. Bernheisel taught singing. (Cyril Ross to A. J. Brown, Jan. 9, 1904; H. C. Whiting to A. J. Brown, Jan. 29, 1904; E. W. Koons to A. J. Brown, Feb. 16, 1904.) It was followed by a training class for helpers.

鳳陽學校] at his guest room. Kim taught the children of Mr. O's family and other pupils. He also preached the gospel to the town's people with his younger brother O Sun-hyŏng, who was a student of Sungsil School of P'yŏngyang. Then he had to return to his home on account of the Russia-Japan War.

The Anak circuit reports two young men, Kim Kwi and O Sunhung, converted during the past year and already widely known both by reason of their work for souls and for the inspiration they are to others. They are men of good families and in comfortable circumstances so that they can give much time to study and to preaching. Mr. Kim was converted last autumn, and put in several months at classes; including the Pyeng Yang Winter Class. In February he moved from Haiju to the magistracy of Chang Yung, where he has been untiring in teaching and preaching. Mr. O is a resident of Chang Yung, and last fall for the first time entered the Academy. He was not then a professing Christian, but was interested and was reading the Bible. His Academy work was good, and from the first he took an active part in religious exercises. During the evangelistic campaign in the city, he made his first attempt at street preaching. When the Japanese army came into Pyeng Yang he returned to his home, and with Mr. Kim began teaching what he knew of the Gospel. He opened his own house for the work, besides preaching in the markets, on the street corners, and to the groups of farmers as they were resting from their work. It was not long till others were interested, and they began to gather in Mr. O's house for Sunday services. The meetings have an attendance of about 40 persons and Mr. O considered the work too important to leave, even that he may attend the Academy next fall, though he hopes yet to be able to complete the course.¹¹⁴

Kim Ku and O Sun-hyŏng gathered a group of about 40 Christians and led the Sunday services. Two young men went to P'yŏngyang in the summer of 1904 to attend a teachers' training class and helpers' class. Kim Ku received the leadership training for a month. He stayed at Pang Ki-ch'ang's house. Two former Tonghak captains—Kim and Pang—studied Christian doctrines and church ministry together for a month! In 1894 they were military revolutionists with rifles in their hands; in 1904 they were Christian leaders with a New Testament in their hands. They regarded Christianity as the alternative for the regeneration of the nation. When Kim and O returned home, Ch'oi Kang-ok (崔光玉), a graduate from Sungsil School and a young leader of the church, accompanied them.¹¹⁵ Ch'oi's protracted evening meetings at Mr. O's house resulted in the conversion of O's family and others. W. M. Baird reported,

¹¹⁴ "Country Evangelistic Work: From Annual Report of Pyeng Yang Station, September 1904," *KF* (Nov. 1904), 217. O Sun-hyŏng entered the Sungsil Haktang on September 1, 1903, and became a Christian soon.

¹¹⁵ Ch'oi Kwang-ok recommended Kim Ku to marry An Sin-ho, a sister of An Ch'ang-ho. Although Kim and An expressed their willingness to marry, she had to decline his proposal next day, for a letter from Mr.

I might give many encouraging instances, but have space for but one. A student named O, from Whang Hai Do, entered school as an inquirer last fall. He belonged to a wealthy family of country gentlemen. He became convinced by the general influence and teachings of the school that Christianity was the truth, and after returning preached it earnestly to his home neighborhood. The war prevented his return to school but he remained at home to preach to his friends and neighbors in his own sarang and out on the streets to the crowds on fair days. The result is a group started and meeting in his house. He and a friend in his who had become a Christian started a school in the neighborhood. They both attended the normal class for teachers and remained through to attend the summer class for leaders. Upon their return home they asked Choi Kwang Ok, one of the tutors of the Academy, who graduated this year, to accompany them home and preach to their neighbors. He went, and they preached to their companions on the boat on the way home. Two of these, from the county of Sin Chun, professed to accept Christ. On reaching their home Choi preached every night in the sarang, strengthening the believers there, and after a while returned home rejoicing with the report that five new persons at the home of young O had professed conversion.¹¹⁶

Kim waded through Confucianism, Taoism, Tonghak, and Buddhism, and finally fixed himself at Christianity. He was unswerving in his patriotism through his religious pilgrimage. Between 1903 and 1904, the patriotic enlightenment movement swept the country. Christians were the major force of the movement. Kim participated in the movement with Christian faith and nationalism. He also established a public school in Changyŏn and led the teachers to teach the new learning such as world history, geography and mathematics in Korean, not the Confucian classic in Chinese. Although he left the Eastern Learning, his concern for the reformation of the old system and the independence of the nation became reinforced with the Christian thought of freedom, equality, love and democracy. Kim made the school stand on the principle of self-support.¹¹⁷

Kim Ku joined the Epworth League of Chinnamp'o Methodist Church in 1905. Probably he sympathized with the young Methodist members of the Epworth League in Seoul—Rhee Syng-man, Chŏng Tŏk-ki (全德基, 1875-1914), Chŏng Sun-man (鄭淳萬), Yi Chun (李儁), Yi

Yang Chu-sam arrived the day in which he proposed to her. She decided to marry another man of the city who had proposed earlier.

¹¹⁶ "Progress at the Academy: From Personal Report of Dr. W. M. Baird, September 1904," *KF* (Nov. 1904), 229.

¹¹⁷ "Chang Yun Eub: This church continues the same as last year, almost destitute of spiritual life. I hope to spend several days with them this fall, teaching such truths as are appropriate to their condition. The leader is a good man. He had gathered quite a number of boys together, many of them from heathen families, in a day school. He charges a fee sufficient only to pay the running expenses of fuel, etc. Study of the Bible is an important feature of the school. He hopes by means of the school to reach some of the younger people of the Eub. He is doing this on his own initiative, and, whether the policy is the wisest one or not, we cannot help but admire the spirit of the man." ("A Year's Retrospect: Personal Report of Rev. C. E. Sharp, July 1905," *KF* (Aug. 1905), 269.)

Tong-nyŏng (李東寧), Chŏng In-ho and others—who were active in the patriotic movement.¹¹⁸ They believed that the future of Korea depended upon Christianity. They had “natural patriotism, love for people, cooperation, and independence.” They believed that religion and politics could not be separated, for they were interdependent like a boat on the water. If the nation fell down, they claimed, there would be no church. In the evening of November 10, a prayer meeting for the nation was held. About 1,000 members of the League gathered at Sangdong Church. They wept and prayed for the nation.¹¹⁹ In November of 1905 when the Protectorate Treaty was signed, Kim Ku went to Seoul as secretary of the Chinnamp’o Epworth League. Representatives of the local leagues gathered at Sangdong Church and prayed for the nation. They participated in a demonstration against the treaty. They made public speeches on the Chongno streets and fought against Japanese police. Many Christians were arrested and imprisoned in November 1905.¹²⁰

Kim Ku and other young Christians neither recited scriptures nor prayed only inside of the chapel in the face of the national crisis. They contended that if the nation perished, there would be no place to pray and study the Bible.¹²¹ But they realized that endless memorials, oral protests and demonstrations were not effective, and the guerrilla resistance of “righteous armies” could not be continued, either. As the Japanese government banned public political assembly, it became impossible to carry on political activities lawfully. Christians, including Kim Ku, decided to devote themselves to the third method—“sillŏk yangsŏng” (實力養成 strengthening people’s power) movement. This was a social and cultural movement for establishing a foundation for the

¹¹⁸ See Pak Yong-man, “Sipchagun ŭigyŏksŏ Manelu ch’ŏngnyŏnhoe,” *SW* (June 1904); Rhee Syng-man, “Taehan kyou tŭlŭi himssŭl il,” *SW* (Aug. 1904); Chŏn Tŏk-kim “Mattang kkaeul il,” *SW* (Oct. 1904); Rhee Syng-man, “Sangdong ch’ŏngnyŏnhoe ŭi hakkyorŭl sŏlsiham,” *SW* (Nov. 1904); Chŏng In-ho, “hananimŭl purŭgo mitŭl kŏt,” *SW* (Dec. 1904).

¹¹⁹ “Chappo,” *KTMS* (Sept. 29, 1905); “Pyŏn chŏnggyo idong,” *KTMS* (Oct. 4, 1905); “Chappo,” *KTMS* (Nov. 20, 1905). Once people joined Christianity against greed officials’ abuse, yet around 1904-05 many young men joined Christianity against Japanese colonialism.

¹²⁰ On November 30, 1905 young Christians, Kim Ha-won, Yi Ki-bŏm, Kim Hong-sik, Ch’a Pyŏng-su, distributed a sheet of “Warning to Compatriots” and made speeches. When the Japanese police beat them severely, people fought against the police with stones. About 100 Koreans were arrested. (“Chappo,” *KTMS* (Dec. 2, 1905)

¹²¹ “Chappo,” *Taehan maeil sinbo* (Dec. 8, 1905).

recovery of Korean sovereignty through promoting the development of native industry and making educational opportunities more widely available to the populace. The edification of the Korean people through education was their major strategy. Basically they argued that the way to a strong and wealthy nation was accepting Christianity.¹²²

7. From Folk Religions to Christianity

Prophecy (圖讖) combined with geomancy (風水) had played no small part in the history of Korea. Almost every event of great significance had been preceded by omens and signs or else by direct verbal prophecy.¹²³ It was said that the founder of the Chosŏn kingdom had a dream in 1394 in which he saw a hen snap off the head of a silkworm. No one could interpret it until a courtier with unaccountable temerity suggested that the hen was the “kye” (鷄 hen) or “Kye-ryong” (鷄龍 hen and dragon) and the silkworm’s head was “Chamdu” (蠶頭) which was applied to the bold western spur of the South Mountain in the city of Seoul. In other words the dynasty whose seat was to be at Kye-ryong Mountain would destroy the Chosŏn dynasty. Although the courtier was beheaded, the prophecy spread among the people.¹²⁴

The *Chŏnggamrok* (鄭鑑錄 Prophecy on Chŏng) was one of the most popular books of prophecy regarding the coming dynasty. It foretold that the Yi Chosŏn dynasty, which was founded in 1392, would be doomed after its period of 500 years, and a new Chŏng dynasty would

¹²² “Kyŏnggo hanmin,” *Taehan maeil sinbo* (Dec. 9, 1905).

¹²³ The monk Tosŏn (道先 827-898) in the late Silla kingdom enhanced the appeal of the geomantic theory, combining with it the Buddhist idea of achieving merit through good works. According to him, the natural features of a land area and their configuration deeply affect a country’s or an individual’s fate. The gentry of each locality regarded their own home ground as auspicious. Wang Kŏn (王建 877-943), who had unified the Later Three Kingdoms, was believed to be the result of Kaesŏng (Songdo 松都, City of Pine Trees)’s virtuous topography. His ancestors believed the geomantic forecast that if they planted pine trees on Mt. Songak, thus making the mountain green, and then moved their house to a site near the southern slope, a hero who would unite Korea’s ancient Samhan would emerge from among their descendents. (Lee Ki-baek, *A New History of Korea*, 107-8.) When the Chosŏn kingdom was founded, a prophecy of “十八子爲王” (Mr. Yi will be a king) was popular. Cho kwang-jo was killed by a forged prophecy of “走肖爲王” (Mr. Cho will be a king) in 1519. Chŏng Yŏ-rip rebelled in 1589 with the belief in the prophecy of “木子亡箕邑興.” (The Yi dynasty shall perish and the Chŏng dynasty will arise.)

¹²⁴ “Prophecy,” *KRw* (March 1901), 113-4.

be built by Chŏng doryŏng (鄭도령 Prince Chŏng) near the Kye-ryong Mountain. Many Korean people had waited for Prince Chŏng, the messiah of the new world, who would save them from the national crisis, and some moved to the Kye-ryong Mountain.

Kim Sang-nim

Kim Sang-nim (金商林 1847-1902) was the first local preacher of Kangwha Island from 1898 to 1902. He was a traditional Confucian scholar. After several failures at the governmental examinations, however, he became interested in the *Chŏnggamrok*. He tried to understand the meaning of the “kunggung” (弓弓) and searched for “sipsŭng jiji” (十勝之地, the ten auspicious places in Korea) where one could escape from the harms and sufferings of the war and social disturbance.¹²⁵ But he could not find a satisfying answer from the *Chŏnggamrok* at the face of the national crisis of the China-Japan War. He heard about Christianity from G. H. Jones and began to read the scriptures and tracts. He realized that the “sipsŭng jiji” (十勝之地) was the “sipchaga jido” (十字架之道 the truth of the cross).¹²⁶ As the Chinese and Korean scriptures translated “the cross” as “sipcha ga” or “sipcha t’ül” (十字架, the wooden frame in the form of the Chinese character “ten”), he interpreted that the Christian cross was the prophesized auspicious place where one could find the salvation. He was baptized by G. H. Jones in October of 1894, and became one of the first Christians in Kangwha. He was appointed as a local preacher in 1898. He was elected as a deacon, but he died in May 1902 before the ordination.¹²⁷

Yi Sŭng-ryun

The China-Japan War in 1894 shook and revolutionized the spirituality of Korean people.

¹²⁵ In the *Tosŏn pigyŏl*, there is a phrase, “山不利 水不利 利在弓弓,” which means “the auspicious place is neither the mountain, nor the waters, but kunggung.” Many theorists tried to interpret the meaning of “弓弓 kunggung.” Yet they agreed to the existence of the ten auspicious places in Korea. Nam Sa-go, a sixteenth-century geomantic theorist, numerated ten hermit places in the deep mountains, which were generally accepted by the people. Ch’oi Che-u, the founder of the Tonghak, reinterpreted “弓弓 kunggung” as “kunggung ŭlŭl 弓弓乙乙” and identified it with a talisman on which the characters “kunggung ŭlŭl 弓弓乙乙” were written.

¹²⁶ Yi Tŏk-chu and Cho I-je, *Kangwha kidokkyo paekyŏnsa* (Kangwha mokuho, 1994), 106.

¹²⁷ “Kim Sang-nim ssi pyŏlsehasim,” *SW* (June 1902), 270-2.

Many other Koreans were converted from the faith in the *Chōnggamrok* to Christianity, interpreting that “Chōngdoryōng” and “sipsūng jijī” as “peace and salvation through the truth of the cross.” Yi Sūng-ryun was one of them. He was converted in 1894 like Kim Sang-nim. When the Russia-Japan War took place in 1904, many people appealed to the *Chōnggamrok* and wandered deep valleys and mountains of the country in order to find the auspicious places to preserve their lives. Even many Christians became deeply concerned with the imminent second coming of Christ and His eschatological Kingdom.¹²⁸

In this context, Yi elaborated his interpretation on the relationship of the “sipsūng jijī” with the cross, and that of “Chōngdoryōng” with Christ. First of all, he criticized the ignorance of those who were still searching for the “sipsūng jijī” in the Kyeryong Mountain and other places with the belief in the *Chōnggamrok*. Then he interpreted the first character of Matthew 1:1 of the Chinese New Testament.

When we see “A” (亞), the first character of “Abraham” (亞伯拉罕) in Matt. 1:1, it has both “sip” (十) of the “sipsūng jijī” and “kungung ŭlūl” (弓弓乙乙). The central white part of the character “A”(亞) is apparently the character “sip” (十). Thus any place where people believe in the Lord’s Cross will become the “sipsūng jijī.” When we see the right and left part of the character “A” (亞), they are obviously “kungung ŭlūl” (弓弓乙乙). Thus we must study and investigate the Bible.¹²⁹

Breaking a Chinese character into several parts or combining two characters into one was the traditional method for the interpretation of a secret prophetic phrase. Mr. Yi used the former method, and found both “sip” (十) of the “sipsūng jijī” and “kungung ŭlūl” (弓弓乙乙) in the character of “A” (亞), the first character of the Chinese New Testament.¹³⁰ In other words, the “sipsūng jijī” (the ten prominently auspicious place) was reinterpreted as “the place where the Cross (十) defeated (勝) the evil.” His next argument was the interpretation of “Chōngdoryōng.”

As the three characters of “Chōngdoryōng” are “chōng” (正 right), “do” (道 way), and “ryōng” (寧 peace), it means that if one follows the right way he or she may live in peace. It is identical with

¹²⁸ “Personal Report of Rev. Cyril Ross, September 1903,” *KF* (May 1904), 176; “Native Propagating of the Gospel, From Annual Report of Miss M. L. Chase, September 1903,” *KF* (Aug. 1904), 182.

¹²⁹ Yi Sūng-ryun, “亞 pōgūm aja soki sipchaga toem,” *KS* (March 21, 1906), 272-3.

¹³⁰ This decoding method is similar to that of the Jewish interpretation of a word or a name by counting the numerical value of the characters.

“tohaji 道下旨,” which means that God let the *Chōnggamrok* foretell the truth of the Lord’s Cross to the people.¹³¹

Mr. Yi interpreted “Chōngdoryōng” not as a messianic figure but as a prophecy for the coming of Christianity, “the true way for the peaceful life,” to Korea. Yi regarded the prophecy of the *Chōnggamrok* as the preparation for the gospel, and asserted that its prophecy was fulfilled by the truth of the Christ’s Cross. He concluded,

Therefore, brothers, do not search for the ten auspicious places any more. If you come before our Lord’ Cross, you will find the very auspicious place. Let’s discard the imperfect words of the *Chōnggamrok*, and propagate the precious character “十” of the “cross 十字架” to the wandering compatriots, and let them know the way of the everlasting life.¹³²

Yi interpreted the prophecy of the *Chōnggamrok* with the fulfillment theory. He argued that Christianity fulfilled the old prophecy; the *Chōnggamrok* was a “schoolmaster” who prepared for the coming of the perfect Way Christianity. The old law (Confucianism) and prophecy (Korean geomantic prophecy) were completed by the Jesus Doctrine.

Between the China-Japan War in 1894 and the Russia-Japan War in 1904, many Korean churches hoisted the white flag of the cross. One could see the church flag of the cross from far away as it was lifted high. It represented not only the extraterritoriality of the Western missionaries under which the church was protected, but also symbolized the “ten auspicious places” where the cross defeated all evil powers and guaranteed peace and joy to those who came under the flag. Traditional Korean geomantic prophecy combined politics and religion together; those who had such a faith turned to Christianity with “a desire for protection and power.”

This chapter reviewed the conversion experiences of the first generation Korean Christian leaders—three Taoists, eight Confucians, many Shamnists, three Buddhists, two pluralists, two Tonghak captains, and two believers in geomantic prophecy. They testified that they accepted Christianity as the fulfillment of traditional Korean religions and interpreted them as the

¹³¹ Yi Sūng-ryun, “*ᄇᆞᆫ pōgūm aja soki sipchaga toem*,” 273.

¹³² Ibid.

preparation for the Christian gospel. Whatever religion or religions one had, he could find points of contact with Christianity and was satisfied with the fuller truth that Christianity provided with.

At the same time, their Christian faith did not clash with their nationalistic activism. There were two prominent groups of leaders who played important roles in the formation of early Korean Christianity—Taoist Christians in P'yŏngyang around S. A. Moffett in P'yŏngyang between 1894 and 1910 and Confucian Christians in Seoul around W. B. Scranton of Sangdong Methodist Church and J. S. Gale of Yŏndong Presbyterian Church between 1903 and 1910. Both groups combined Christian spirituality with patriotism at the face of the national crisis. For them politics and religion were inseparable like the two sides of a coin.

In 1906 C. E. Sharp commented on the two major motives for seeking Christ in Whanghae province—the Christian Church as a political society that provided political protection and power, and Christianity as a religion of Western civilization. Nevertheless, there was a “third phase” of this turning to Christianity. There existed “a real soul hunger” and “a real work of God’s Spirit.”¹³³ As we have seen in this chapter, these three things—1) a desire for protection and power in the political and social unrest, 2) the realization of the failure of ancient civilization and the need for modern civilization and culture that Western Christian nations possessed, and 3) the discontent with traditional religions and the spiritual hunger for a more perfect religion—prepared for the Christian gospel. Although these motives were inseparable, the last one was most important to many Koreans at the deepest spiritual level.

¹³³ C. E. Sharp, “Motives For Seeking Christ,” *KMF* (Aug. 1906), 182-3.